

SECRET STATE GONE PRIVATE?

Senior police run anti-terror teams through private company

A secret state watchdog has accused the government of effectively running a privatised surveillance force after tracing final authority over several major intelligence units back to a privately-run organisation – which is exempt from Freedom of Information and public oversight rules.

Three organisations have been pinpointed by the Fitwatch group, including the National Extremism Tactical Co-ordination Unit (Nectu), which recently came under the spotlight after one of its officers attempted to plant an inaccurate statement about terrorism within the green movement in the *Observer* newspaper.¹

The other two groups, the National Public Order Intelligence Unit (Npoi) and the National Domestic Extremism Team (Ndet), manage public and covert protest surveillance and run protection operations on targeted companies and individuals respectively.

Freedom has since found a fourth organisation, the Confidential Intelligence Unit, which is headed up by the same officer responsible for Npoi.²

All four groups are ultimately run by the Association of Chief Police Officers, which

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LENS CAP EDINBURGH



A policeman looks on as up to 200 people demonstrate in solidarity with Greek protesters in Edinburgh. The vigil, which started on Bristo Square, was marred when police decided to arrest Greek attendees as the 'ringleaders' of the event as it marched into Princess Street and a sit-down began.

Photo: Indymedia Scotland

PRIVATE SECTOR PENSIONS FLATLINING

Following *Freedom*'s report last issue that public sector pensions could come under attack, it has been warned that a new buildup of pension liabilities in the private sector as the stock markets tumble could lead to more fund closures – and not just to new members.

The latest figures from the Pension Protection Fund place 86% of defined benefit pensions – where people are paid a percentage of their final salary linked to inflation – in the red, with a total liability of £136 billion by the end of last month – from a surplus of £26.1 billion last year.

As in the last pensions crisis, a huge gap has opened up between assets owned by private sector pension pots and the cash they are liable to pay out to fund members as

stock markets fall and the financial crisis continues.

Private pension funds are usually run by the managers of the companies they are linked to, and have repeatedly been used to invest in risky, but potentially profitable areas.

The tendency for high-risk investments has led most pension funds to sink significant funds into private equity, PFI and junk loans, leaving them vulnerable as the financial crisis hit.

HBOS in particular has accrued a £50 billion deficit, and independent stakeholders in the fund are lobbying for Lloyds TSB to underwrite it should the proposed merger between the two banks go through.

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

AIR TRAVEL: Plane stupid have stated they are sorry for causing holiday disruption, but believe it is the lesser of two evils. They said: "We took the decision to disrupt the airport to directly reduce the CO2 impact of Stansted, as a response to the government's consent to its expansion. We did so with heavy hearts, knowing that it would disrupt passengers, because we knew the consequences of this action couldn't be worse than the consequences of inaction."

DEFENCE: In spite of the cold, raining and windy conditions, at 4pm on 8th December people gathered at the gates to the UK headquarters of Heckler & Koch, based within the Easter Park Industrial Estate on Lenton Lane, Nottingham. Proud owners of H&K weaponry include the brutal militias of Darfur – the Janjaweed.

DEFENCE: All serious charges have been dropped against those prosecuted for Brighton's 'Carnival Against the Arms Trade' in June. The campaign is directed at the local EDO-MBM arms factory in Moulsecoomb. Fourteen people are currently facing charges in Brighton Magistrate's Court, but in the first hearing, prosecutor's attempts to land counts of 'conspiracy' and 'violent disorder' were eventually dropped. Only minor charges still stand.

IMMIGRATION: The Home Office has reopened the immigration detention centre Penine House at Manchester airport. Borders and Immigration minister Phil Woolas was there personally to 'unveil' it.

The prison had been closed after the prison inspectorate found it was providing inadequate cooking and washing facilities, lack of 'fresh air', and no means of being in touch with family and friends outside.

POSTAL SERVICE: Postal workers are warning that changes to working practices which suggest they should 'walk faster' on their routes is unsustainable. The problem centres on a Royal Mail computer system called Pegasus Europe Geo-route, which calculates the optimum post load that can be delivered by staff.

SOLIDARITY: An attempted occupation of the Greek Embassy, in solidarity with the protestors against Greek police brutality, turned into a five-hour blockade. The combined groups, including anarchists from Liberty & Solidarity, raised the red and black flag in place of the Greek one on the lawn of the embassy in west London's wealthy suburb of Holland Park.

UNIONS: The inaugural meeting of the East Anglian branch of the National Shop Stewards Network took place on 29th November, one of the last areas in the country not covered by the network. It was agreed that Cambridge would be used as the regional 'capital' and location for future meetings.

LENS CAP LONDON



Picture: aworldtowin.net

Members of the community from Dale Farm in Essex deliver their message outside the Royal Courts of Justice in London. The campaigners are fighting to stop the eviction of families from the site by Basildon Council, which has set aside £3 million to remove travellers who are currently living there without planning permission. The protest took place on the day a hearing was held into the situation by law lords. A final decision on whether Basildon can carry out the evictions is expected in the new year.

Sea Shepherd back to Antarctic

Those pirates of compassion in Sea Shepherd have returned to confront the Japanese whaling fleet in the Antarctic waters of the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary. The Steve Irwin left Newcastle, Australia on December 7th to disrupt eight whalers who aim to kill 935 minke whales and 50 fin whales.

Nottingham crew member Dan, e-mailing from aboard the vessel, said: "This is Sea Shepherd's fifth voyage to Antarctica to intercept the whaling fleet of Japan and my third. We have high hopes, our crew are dedicated and talented, we have new equipment and a few tricks up our sleeves."



The Sea Shepherd in 2006

This year is particularly critical as the whaling industry's situation is precarious and believed to be debt ridden. This will be compounded by the loss of Yushin – the Institute for Cetacean Research's Tokyo restaurant and whale meat shop – which is set to close in 2010. Only around 4% of the Japanese population eat whale meat regularly.

That the traditional ceremony to see the fleet off from Shimonoseki was abandoned this year is another encouraging sign of the industry's demise. Even some Japanese politicians are beginning to tire of defending and subsidising the loss-making slaughter. In this climate Dan is optimistic that Sea Shepherd's intervention can continue to make a difference: "The whaling fleet is on the ropes and we hope to break them financially. Each year so far we have managed to stop them getting their quota and forced them home without a profit."

Last year's controversy following the detention of two crew members delivering an anti-whaling letter to a whaling vessel, and an incident in which a bullet was allegedly fired at Captain Paul Watson, means that tensions will be even greater this season. According to Dan, in the current 'Operation Musashi' activists "as always intend to deploy our own brand of high seas direct action, forcibly stopping the slaughter without risking the lives of the fleet's crew." This time Sea Shepherd, staying out until March, will be alone as Greenpeace will not be taking to the waves.

Steve



Poverty on the quiet

When Labour got into power Tony Blair promised to eradicate child poverty within a generation – later clarified to mean by 2020. Gordon Brown earlier this year described child poverty as a “scare that demeans Britain”. According to the Child Poverty Action Group a shocking 3.9 million children live in conditions of chronic deprivation today.

Britain is one of the most unequal societies in the developed world. After eleven years of Labour government the gap between the rich and poor in this country is still 20% higher now than it was in 1985. It is not only children who suffer. Over two and half million British pensioners live in poverty according to Age Concern.

Yet interest in the issue has remained low. Recent research funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation explored the role that the media plays into shaping attitudes towards poverty and particularly whether

the media's obsession with the lives of the rich and famous was affecting public attitudes to the poor.

Researchers looked over a week at 640 reports referring to poverty. While they noted that the media was not inundated with reports neither was reporting of poverty absent, however they found that the way that the media reported poverty was not striking a chord with the public. When asked people were unable to recollect images of media coverage of UK poverty.

Particularly important was the fact that the media did not convey the experiences of people living in poverty. The poor – unlike the rich – are denied a voice in the media. Overall poverty is presented as a general issue, individual experiences and stories are not told. The report concluded that “the public presentation of poverty in the UK media does not appear to be adequately representing the realities of UK poverty”.

Freedom, last issue, reported on the campaign to deface state posters threatening so-called ‘benefit scroungers’. According to the National Audit Office £0.8 billion is lost in benefit fraud, just 0.6% of total expenditure. Nearly £2 billion is lost through government error. Therefore, for every £1 extra taken by the poor the state manages to lose us £2.20. Tax fraud costs the country £1.5 billion but do we see pictures of fat cat business people fiddling their taxes?

Poverty has not gone away. Far from it. It has though slipped down in most people's consciousness. The research carried out for the Joseph Rowntree Trust suggests one reason for this is the way the media portrays poverty – in such a way that makes it difficult for people to empathise with the poor. This is compounded by a state that is all too ready to stereotype.

Richard Griffin

Secret state gone private?

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operates as a private company and provides annual returns to Companies House.

The Association, which comprises some of the most senior figures in policing, acts as an umbrella for the four groups, meaning they are under no obligation to release information on their activities – allowing them to be even more secretive than MI5 in some areas.

Although they are private groups, the four agencies employ service police officers seconded from forces across the country. Fitwatch noted: “They appear to have access to police resources and intelligence. They gather and analyse intelligence which is then used to ‘advise’ police operations, investigations and public order strategy. They are, in

effect, a privatised police force. Given they operate under this shroud of secrecy, little is known about these interlinked units. We know they have in the past focused their attentions on animal rights campaigns, but have now developed a wider circle of interest.

“They have a stated aim to ‘reduce or remove the threat from domestic extremism’ with an apparent emphasis on protecting the interests of private business. Given the presence of the above officers at EDO,³ it seems the campaign against the Brighton arms company has also come under the heading of ‘domestic extremism’.”

Nectu said: “Nectu is not a public authority as defined by Schedule 1 of the FOIA

[Freedom of Information Act]. Therefore there are no obligations on Nectu to disclose information under the Act. In the spirit of the Act, Nectu aims to make available as much information that it properly can.” For more, go to fitwatch.blogspot.com

1 See page 14 for our exclusive interview with veteran eco-anarchists about the reality of their influence in the green movement.

2 The role of Head of CIU and Npou was advertised in September at JobsUK.

3 An arms manufacturer, now owned by ITT, which has lost millions through a targeted anti-war campaign over the last few years at its Brighton factory.

PUBLIC SECTOR

Bottom of the health pile

A new breakdown of health poverty published sees Greenwich, Hartlepool and others at the bottom

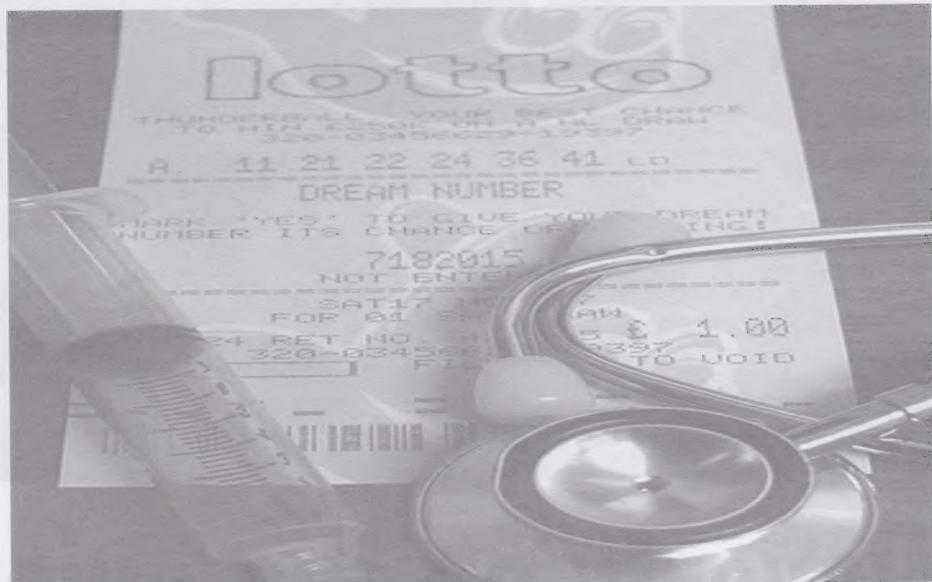
A breakdown of inequalities in the health system has revealed 40 local authorities where the gap in health is continuing to widen in relation to the national average, with men and women continuing to suffer in deprived wards from shorter lifespans and poorer quality of health.

The 'spearhead' group of local authorities, which are in the bottom fifth of the country for life expectancy at birth, cancer mortality and cardiovascular disease rates for under 75s and who score low in the Index of Multiple Deprivation, is failing to catch up to health levels in wealthier boroughs, it found.

The study noted: "The life expectancy gap means some families losing loved ones earlier than others. Around 13,700 fewer people aged between 30-59 years old would have died in Spearhead Areas across 2003-05 if death rates had been the same as in the rest of England."

Particularly hard-hit were the local authorities of Greenwich, Blackpool, Sandwell and Wigan falling furthest behind for men and Hartlepool, North East Lincolnshire, Kingston upon Hull and Oldham for women.

The health gap has widened significantly across the board, as *Freedom* reported in July when it was revealed that there was now a



20-year difference in lifespan between the richest and poorest wards.

On a wider scale, men in the least deprived areas lived an average of seven years longer than those in the most deprived areas, and had 13 more years free of disability.

A similar, but less marked, pattern was evident for women.

While overall life expectancy has increased, wealthier wards have seen a far faster improvement than poorer ones. While life expectancy in Rotherham has risen by 2.1 years for women in Rotherham since 1995-97, it has risen by 6.4 years in the London Borough of Kensington & Chelsea.

The new figures add some flesh to the

figures and widens the scope of study to include infant mortality, finding that: "continuing decline in the overall number of infant deaths seen in most areas obscures the widening infant mortality gap between social groups. Many babies are left with long-term health conditions causing untold misery to families".

Meanwhile a separate study has found that cancer death rates are higher in the most deprived parts of Wales, and again, the gap is growing between them and richer parts of the country.

In the last five years the gap has increased from 62 cancer deaths per 100,000 people in 2001 to 78 deaths per 100,000 in 2006.

Frontline fire jobs figures stark

New figures brought out by the fire service has shown a falling number of full time firefighters over the last five years, with casualised 'retained' staff now making up an increasing proportion of the workforce.

Although the report has taken pains to headline with an increase in total workers in the fire service, the number of people actually fighting fires has decreased overall, with most of the posts being taken up by backroom staff.

While the number of full-time equivalent positions has increased since 2004 from 10,853 to 11,744 this year, the full-time workforce has declined from 31,826 to 30,580 – a loss of 1,246 posts. Overall, 355 roles have been lost – not taking into account the greater expertise and experience that the full-time workforce provided – while the number of people and buildings being covered has continued to rise.

The expansion of the retained firefighter system has been highly controversial, effectively cutting out many of the benefits that a full-time worker can accrue and according to the Fire Brigades Union, increasing the level of danger for their members.

Their view seems to have been vindicated, as major injuries, which had fallen to just 71 in 2005, leapt to over 113 in 2007 and 106 in 2008 respectively.

The number of backroom roles meanwhile has increased significantly, by 1,580 from 6,220 to 7,800, in the same period. Over 400 of these roles were recruited in the last year alone.

In November *Freedom* exclusively reported that a series of cuts were being implemented across large areas of the UK as misallocation of funding hit. An FBU source warned at the time that funding problems would exacerbate job losses across the service in the next year.

University and College Union win at Nottingham

An attempt to derecognise UCU at Nottingham Trent University has been beaten off after it became clear that a 'greylisting' campaign in solidarity was not going to go away.

The university struck a new last minute deal as the greylisting – where lecturers from other universities would have refused to help or work for Nottingham – was about to come into effect. The campaign had already seen a strike in October and had been rumbling on since the union was officially derecognised in July. Managers had wanted to replace union representation with employee reps, effectively marginalising them, and attempted the immediate derecognition – which broke their own agreement of a nine-month wind-down period – after this was refused. In response, a ballot was called which saw 77% vote for strike action, a solid turnout on the day and a national rally was held the day after. Negotiations were restarted shortly after.

The victory means the University got the opposite response to what they were after, prompting a membership increase of 60.

IN BRIEF

ELECTRONICS: Sony is to cut more than 16,000 permanent and part-time jobs from its worldwide electronics division and will raise prices for its products in the face of dwindling consumer spending.

It is expected to set the tone for similar moves by Sony's domestic and regional rivals, and could be the start of an even more widespread series of cuts.

ELECTRONICS: The co-founder of the Carphone Warehouse has abruptly resigned from all his directorships after it emerged that he had broken City rules by secretly mortgaging his £157 million stake in the mobile phones retailer.

David Ross failed to tell the company – which is run by his lifelong friend Charles Dunstone – that he had pledged the core of his fortune as collateral in order to support struggling commercial property investments.

FINANCE: Spanish bank Santander has said it will cut 1,900 jobs in its three UK businesses – Abbey, Alliance & Leicester and Bradford & Bingley.

The bank said that the jobs would be cut in 2009 to reduce costs and did not rule out compulsory redundancies.

The announced cut represents 8% of Santander's British workforce.

FISHING: Some Filipinos working in Northern Ireland's fishing industry are suffering abuse, intimidation and poor pay. Some fishermen have claimed they are paid as little as £20 a week, for more than 70 hours work.

There are also those who said they have suffered physical attacks, humiliation and racial abuse.

MANUFACTURING: Unite shop stewards working for IMI Scott in Manchester have been made redundant in a management-engineered process which union members say is designed to break the union.

In a statement, the union said: "This is just the latest in a long list of barriers IMI have put up to try to prevent the union from being an effective force in the workplace. Clearly IMI Scott is determined to oppose effective trade unionism."

PHARMACEUTICALS: GMB members who work at Chemilines Ltd in London attended a mass meeting on Sunday 7th December at the Brent Indian Association and voted to hold three days of strike action.

The first day of action will be on 16th December, followed by further days of action on 22nd December and 7th January 2009. The actions will take place from 8am.

The strike action is over a pay offer of 1% per quarter linked to productivity strings which was rejected by the workers. The secret ballot of the 68 GMB members got a 100% vote for strike action.

Oakington under fire

The notorious Oakington Immigration Detention centre has been singled out for heavy criticism by the prison inspectorate, four years after declaring it had cleaned up its act following exposure in a BBC documentary.

The facility, which receives £1,200 per place for a week according to the most recent available figures, "had deteriorated significantly" with excessive use of force, poor facilities and a rising number of incidents of self-harm among inmates, according to inspectors.

Some 40% of trainees said most staff failed to treat them with respect. In August of this year, fifty of them wrote an open letter about the centre, demanding that their human rights be respected and that the office should show them some respect and pay attention to their views. "It shouldn't be

allowed to threaten our lives", they noted.

The ex-RAF site, which holds 328 male detainees, was found to have been holding a Chinese man for two years without realising, indicating a "distant and reactive" attitude.

The use of force to control detainees has risen at the centre – which is run by private security company Global Solutions Ltd – from 53 incidents last year to 34 in the first six months of this year. The number of detainees put on segregation for breaching rules has also risen, from 328 times in the whole of 2007 to 220 in the first six months of this year.

Donna Covey, chief executive of the Refugee Council, said: "It is unacceptable to lock people up simply for asking for safety in the UK, and then in a place which is clearly incapable of looking after them properly."



Miners ripped off again

Two solicitors have been found guilty of ripping off disabled ex-miners to the tune of tens of millions of pounds after they claimed the vast majority of a compensation package awarded for workplace injuries.

James Beresford and Douglas Smith, of Beresfords solicitors, may represent just the tip of the iceberg however, as partners from another 67 law firms are due to come under the spotlight for similar practices. More than half of the total £6.9bn compensation package secured from the government has been taken as legal fees.

The pair's law firm took £115m under the no-win, no-fee contracts as they winkled money out of the government, handling nearly 100,000 claims at an average profit per head of £1,200.

The firm made their profits by slicing 25% off miners' compensation awards on top of their own extremely high legal fees paid direct by the government. As a result, James Beresford became the highest-paid lawyer in the country.

By comparison, the family of George Hopkinson, who died of a lung obstruction after years of inhaling coal dust in the mines, saw a final payout of just under £550. And in one case of a miner's widow's claim, the government paid Beresfords £2,431 – the widow got just £281.

Further hearings are due to begin next year involving firms in Sheffield, Leeds, Newcastle, Manchester, Liverpool, Preston, York, Hull, Derbyshire and Essex, with the total cost once the cases are settled rounding off at £7bn.

INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

BULGARIA: Police have staged a bizarre protest outside the interior ministry with over 2,000 officers gathering to smoke cigarettes as a sign of protest.

The police, who were protesting over low salaries, came up with the idea for a smoking protest as a way to show their discontent without going on strike, which is illegal.

It is understood that the protesters were not penned in, provoked, attacked or photographed for their efforts.

CHINA: Workers staged a brave sit-in protest outside a Shanghai factory on Tuesday 8th December. The rare case of direct action is the latest sign of strain in the Chinese manufacturing industry, which has been hit hard by the economic crisis.

Workers protested against managers' refusal to pay at least six months' worth of overtime, bonuses and benefits. The phone went unanswered at Huan Hsin Group, which owns the factory, when reporters tried repeatedly to contact them.

Factory gates were blocked by several police cars while a dozen police officers monitored the peaceful protest, which began on the 7th.

Workers have complained that some protestors had been taken away by police and that a cordon was set up to separate the striking workers from bystanders.

FRANCE: Demonstrations against the Darcos reforms of the education system are intensifying across France with more students joining protests and engaging in direct action.

Students angry about reforms to the French secondary examination course, the baccalaureate and the planned loss of 25,000 teaching posts over the next two years have taken to the streets.

Students have organised assemblies themselves and voted on what action they will take.

In Lyon there has been a steady stream of wildcat demos and blockades over the last few weeks, with at least four occupations attempted on Tuesday 8th December alone.

In Ambérieu (Bugey) students and teachers have voted for strike action and occupied their building. Further protests are planned.

IRELAND: Chief executive of mobile phone giants O2, Danuta Gray has decided on behalf of the thousands of workers at his company that collective bargaining is not what they want or expect.

The statement came following a vote by Irish staff to strike in order to gain union recognition from the company.

The Communications Workers Union (CWU) said O2 was refusing to recognise the union for collective bargaining but it did represent individual staff in grievance and disciplinary proceedings.

LENS CAP ATHENS



THE MORNING AFTER: Athens residents walk past burnt out cars following another night of intense rioting. The Greek government is now offering 10,000 euro payouts to businesses targeted by the protestors.

Chicago factory under workers' control

While US President-elect Barack Obama continues to talk of a 'new deal' and a 'bailout for the common people', workers at a Chicago factory took matters into their own hands by occupying their factory after receiving just three days' notice that they were about to lose their jobs.

Workers at Republic Windows and Doors occupied their factory on 5th December, following an announcement by management that they were to lose their jobs due to Bank of America refusing to give the company credit of \$5 million to pay off its short term debts.

The occupation came to an end a week later when over 200 workers unanimously voted to accept a settlement which management totalling \$1.75 million.

The deal will provide the workers with:

eight weeks of pay they are owed, two months of continued health coverage and pay for all accrued and unused vacation. A new foundation, dedicated to reopening the plant under control of the workers has also been announced.

United Electrical Workers Union organiser Leah Fried said the occupation was a reaction to the company failing to give workers the required 60 days' notice they have to issue by law before shutting down.

One worker of 13 years of service stated that her family could only 'make do' for three months without a pay cheque. In a country where the Salvation Army recently ran out of its emergency food stores, making do without a wage for three months is simply not an option.

Notes from the United States

In Hanoi at the start of December the Second National Congress of the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange was held. It demanded compensation from the United States government and the largest makers of such weapons of mass destruction as Agent Orange – Dow Chemical and Monsanto. Between 1962 and 1971 eighteen million gallons of the poison were dropped over Vietnam. It's estimated that this war crime alone has left upwards of three million Vietnamese severely disabled or ill.

At the same time as this Congress was

taking place, about a hundred nations met in Norway to sign what Human Rights Watch has called "the most significant arms control and humanitarian treaty in a decade" – a new international treaty banning the use of cluster bombs. The convention prevents stockpiling and trading of such WMDs. It also requires signatories to clear contaminated areas within ten years. Victims of cluster bombs are 98% civilians; over a quarter are children. The United States, however, has refused to sign, despite making some of the

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Greece: war on the streets

Greek society has been shaken to its core this month as thousands of workers, students and immigrants took to the streets to avenge the murder of a 15-year-old boy shot in the heart by police.

Alexandros Grigoropoulos was killed during a minor confrontation with police in the Exarcheia district of Athens, an area populated with social centres that historically was a centre of resistance to the military junta.

The murder immediately provoked the wrath of the Greek anarchist movement, who were joined on the streets of every major city by thousands of citizens building barricades, attacking police stations and battling police in riots which paralysed the entire country.

Over 6,000 people turned out for the young boy's funeral, with riot police provoking and attacking the crowd before ultimately tear-gassing funeral attendees.

The focus of the anger has now shifted from the murder to broader social issues with demonstrations highlighting police brutality, the government's mishandling of pensions and high levels of unemployment.

As rioting entered its fifth consecutive day on Wednesday 10th December a symbolic one-day general strike, originally called in protest at the government's incompetent handling of the economic crisis, brought the country to a standstill.

Intense fighting with protestors of all ages armed with molotovs, cobblestones and crash helmets has gripped the entire nation, with focus points around the main universities in Athens and Thessaloniki.

The occupied universities are now serving as central organising hubs for the demonstrations, thanks to the Greek law of sanctuary, which prevents any police or state forces from entering their grounds.



While one student assembly has already passed a popular vote for the 'violent overthrow of the government', a statement by a group calling itself the 'Occupied School of Theatre' has further explained the position of the students and anarchist revolutionaries.

"This is a generation that has been systematically excluded from any means of expression, deprived of any possibility to decide for itself at school, at university or at work, through its growing alienation," the statement, entitled 'We are at war', began. "As long as there is no justice, there will be no social peace. We are out on the streets as part of this society but also as part of this social rage. We do not seek to be the leaders of this discontent, we are not experts in violence. We are out on the streets because we are on Alexandros's side. We know well, from our everyday experience in social and labour struggles, in the struggles of immigrants for dignity, in the struggles of the marginalised and the prisoners for a glimpse of freedom, that the state and the institutions of power

have always confronted us with the finger on the trigger. We do not just feel hurt, outraged and revolted by the unjust death of a young person. We are also fully aware that, whether we are friends, parents or relatives, for each one of us and each of our beloved ones, there is a police bullet waiting for its fatal call. The explosive social situation these days could – and should – create the conditions and the consciences for a better future. But it could also create the conditions for accepting and legitimising the use of firearms by the police."

The statement goes on to outline incidents of police openly pointing handguns at protesters, knife-wielding fascists fraternising with riot police and shots being fired by police during the funeral. Leftist parties have come out against the violent demonstrations with Aleka Papariga, Secretary General of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), dissociating "the justified wrath for the victims of state suppression" from the rioter and backing the government's call for national unity.

Notes from the United States

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heaviest use of cluster bombs – in Laos in the 1960s and '70s; and by supplying Israel with the weapons to use against the Lebanese in 2006. In a White House briefing in early December Bush's press secretary, Dana Perino, actually ridiculed the idea that the United States sign such a ban in a reply to veteran correspondent Helen Thomas, who asked Why not? Perino replied, laughing, "What I have forgotten is all the reasons why, and so I'll get it [sic] for you."

• In California, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger declared a fiscal emergency on 1st December. He warned that California could run out of money within two months. The state's deficit is growing and could reach \$28 billion (£18 billion) by 2010. At the same time the kind of atmosphere of cuts and severe downturns such as Britain experienced particularly under Thatcher are

now becoming widespread all across the US.

In Philadelphia, for instance, the mayor (Michael Nutter) has suggested that eleven of the city's libraries be closed, that seven fire companies be disbanded, 68 city swimming pools be shut down and 800 local government positions eliminated. In San Diego school authorities have cut funding for teacher supplies back so far that one high school teacher has started to sell advertisements on test papers.

As reported in *Freedom* recently, the number of those relying on food stamp welfare is at an all-time high. The Food and Nutrition Service reported that over 31 million people had to use the food stamp programme in September this year; this is a larger number than in November 2005, the previous highest number – a record set after hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Louis Further

New Zealand anarchists get organised

A new organisation has been formed with the aim of building a serious revolutionary anarchist-communist movement in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement (AWSM) say they are an organisation working towards a classless, stateless society. "We are made up of revolutionary class-struggle anarchists from across Aotearoa/New Zealand" a statement from their International secretary explained. "For now, we are a small organisation with members in Wellington, Christchurch and a few smaller towns across the country ... Informal chats over the last few years turned into serious planning a few months ago and a little conference at Labour weekend [late October] in Wellington."

The group says their priority is active involvement in workplace struggles and industrial action as well as community based campaigns in our neighbourhoods.

COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

This bumper issue is the last of the year for us, and was put together at break-neck speed by a huge variety of writers to whom we are eternally grateful. As *Freedom* aims to do, we've included a variety of viewpoints and roundups from across the movement in this issue, including greens, union critics, co-op advocates (and detractors), photo-journalists, parents and friends.

As we head into 2009, we hope to continue mixing in reports from the issues which affect not just the movement, but everyone, while retaining our function of passing on the most important information for active anarchists through our 'Get Active' series and tutoring newcomers via our theory section.

We'd also like to invite you to send in your reports, of what's happening in your town and county, pointing out information and issues that we may have missed - we are after all a fallible bunch!

It has, as always, been a privilege and a pleasure writing to keep such a fine body of people informed and, every so often, entertained through some pretty monumental changes in the world. Next year is going to see interesting times, we will do our best to fight the good fight through these pages and support the cause of liberty, no matter how dark things may get. If you'd like to join us in doing so, you will be more than welcome.

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 17th January 2009 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 8th January. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to 'The Editors', *Freedom*, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Blog Bites (from anarchism.pageabode.com/blogs/andrewnflood)

In this update to a diary piece about his speaking tour of the US earlier this year, the Irish anarchist writer Andrew Flood recalls his trip into the old steel town of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania...

Pittsburgh reminds me strongly of Cork city as its built on a number of hills surrounding a couple of rivers. Also like Cork it's got a fair amount of derelict building, in fact like Cork of a decade or more ago there are whole sections which are derelict.

The passengers on my flight into Pittsburgh (from Atlanta) included a US soldier in uniform who was returning from Iraq. Towards the end of the flight the stewardess drew attention to his presence and said something about how grateful they all were at his sacrifice etc, etc.

Everybody (except me) then clapped, which was an odd feeling. I can understand their perspective as, if you're a US citizen, he's not just a member of an imperialist army but also potentially your son (or daughter) but throughout the trip the strongest disconnect I felt was that between my gut reaction to those in military uniform and that of those around me.

It's hard to sum this up clearly, it certainly wasn't a dislike (never mind hatred) for individual soldiers. I talked to a few, although of course they tended to be those who had turned against the war. It was more that I was coming from a political culture where popular identification was going to be far more with an abstract insurgent who lay in ambush than the imperialist invader/occupier. I'd felt this quite strongly also while listening to the contributions of the vets during the Winter Soldier hearings in Gainsville, Florida a few days before.

Pittsburgh is of course an old union town with a long radical history. Perhaps in turn this is due to large scale migration there from Merthyr Tydfil in Wales which saw a working class insurrection led by the local coal miners in 1831, the first time the red flag was flown in Britain.

That rising was brutally put down and this was the period in which Pittsburgh was undergoing rapid growth, reaching 1,000 factories by 1857. In July 1892 Pittsburgh was the site of the Homestead battle when thousands of striking workers defended themselves against 300 attacking Pinkertons. The battle went on all day as more and more armed workers poured into the area, by the evening the Pinkertons were forced to surrender.

On 16th July, four thousand soldiers were snuck into the town and they attacked the occupied factories and evicted the workers. This allowed Henry Clay Frick to restart the furnaces.



Alexander Berkman pointing a gun at steel factory owner Henry Clay Frick in a failed assassination attempt during the Homestead strike in 1892. While Frick returned to work within a week, Berkman served fourteen years in prison.

Freedom to be an anarchist

Richard Griffin has taken up the issue of the identity anarchists writing in *Freedom* (25th October 2008) and is in favour of concealment. He considers it to be the only realistic, as he says, approach for anarchists to take. Many anarchists fear they put themselves in danger from their employers and the State. That is possible. However, this spineless behaviour means they the dignity of being an anarchist.

Anarchists have become caricatures of themselves. Chesterton in *The Man who was Friday* was right to portray anarchists as secretive. An editor of *Freedom* defended his, or is it her, wish to be anonymous. We do not know who runs *Freedom* because it is a secret. They would be a state within the state. I have pointed out, because it is never referred to and is funny, that the much vaunted Bakunin believed in a secret dictatorship.

That is kept quiet. Anarchists sneer at grey bureaucrats who run the country and the secrecy of the police. Anarchists, however, are not so different. This is no great problem for they are also human. What is ridiculous is they are so smug and pious. They talk big but what they say loses

conviction. These anarchists profess to believe in the individual. We should be free to be ourselves! They cannot be free because they are hiding.

Anarchists are confined by their concepts. They are imprisoned by the ideas of anarchism, capitalism and the State. These have got us nowhere. Only people, individuals, exist and to be an anarchist one must be free. Richard Griffin deserves his dues for he admits to being a person, himself. Let's have more of them.

Peter Gibson

Editor's note: What is ridiculous, Peter, is for an academic such as yourself whose own job and lifestyle is not in the least affected by your beliefs to sit in judgement – both pious and smug – on those who may not have that luxury.

I find it utterly incomprehensible that you would attempt to say anarchists are 'confined by their concepts' when you are the one trying to impose your views on how personal information should be used despite all the problems this has brought us over the years. I know of various people who have given false details to police before now and are only free today because of it, but presumably their physical freedom is an affront to your 'un-confining' concept of what anarchism should entail.

LETTERS AND COMMENT

If it weren't for the sheer eccentricity of such a viewpoint I'd be tempted to ask whether you work for the secret state, who would absolutely love to have their job made easier by such full disclosure. Perhaps I should stand at the Freedom Press table at the London bookfair (as I do every year – how terribly secretive of me) handing out my medical records and home address as well as subscription forms?

Rob Ray

A third of Scots classed as breadline poor

According to Changing UK, a study conducted by Sheffield University, 32% of Scots are breadline poor. This is defined as a poverty line so low that people are excluded from participating in 'the norms of society'.

In each decade since 1970, Scotland had the highest proportion of people in the breadline poor category in the UK. In 1970, 27% of the Scottish population was classed as breadline poor, with the figure dropping to 23% in 1980. After 10 years of Thatcherism, the figure for 1990 was back to its 1970 value – with 27% of Scots falling into the category. It gets worse, with the figure rising to 32% in 2000.

The proportion of people in Scotland classified as 'asset wealthy' also rose, from 10% in 1980 to 11% in 1990, and up to 15% in 2000. For those in the middle ('non-poor, non-wealthy'), there were squeezed as it fell from 68% in 1980 to 54% in 2000. This means that the gap between rich and poor has widened over the 40-year period.

For the UK as a whole, the breadline poor figure rose from 23% in 1970 to 27% in 2000, while the middle category fell from 66% in 1980 to 50% in 2000. The report concludes that "areas that were already wealthy have tended to become disproportionately wealthier and areas that experienced high levels of relative poverty saw these levels increase. The country has also become steadily more socially fragmented since 1971".

So the next time David Cameron witters on about the 'broken society', remind him who broke it – the Tories' beloved Thatcher and her neo-liberal ideology.

Iain McKay

Green anarchism

The division of green anarchism into two groups – techno-positive and techno-negative is not easily achieved.

Most green anarchists are a bit of both. Solar power, wind generators, and some hydro-electricity projects are very popular in the green anarchist community, but tower blocks and motorways are very unpopular. Back-to-nature projects are popular in the green anarchist community, but gang-hood-violently-centred replacements of civilisation are very unpopular.

C.A.

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CRISIS RESPONSE

Bailouts or co-operatives?

Iain McKay argues for the latter

As capitalism goes into crisis (again), there have been bailouts of the financial sector as well as calls for the bailing out of certain industries. There are many reasons for rejecting this, but the problem is that their workers will be harmed by this. As such, I think it is wise for anarchists to have some practical suggestion on what to do – beyond, of course, calls for social revolution.

May I suggest that in return for any bailouts, the company is turned into a co-operative? This is a libertarian alternative to just throwing money at capitalists or nationalising workplaces.

Proudhon argued in 1848 he "did not want to see the State confiscate the mines, canals and railways; that would add to monarchy, and more wage slavery. We want the mines, canals, railways handed over to democratically organised workers' association..." In his classic work, *The General Idea of the Revolution*, he made a similar suggestion as part of his critique of capitalism and he influenced the Communards, who turned empty workplaces into co-operatives.

In 1912, Kropotkin argued along similar lines. He noted that the "State phases which we are traversing now seem to be unavoidable". However, aiding "the Labour Unions

to enter into a temporary possession of the industrial concerns" anarchists would provide "an effective means to check the State Nationalisation". So there is an anarchist tradition of making this kind of demand.

What of the obvious objection, namely that this is not socialism and just 'worker capitalism'.

Yes, it is not socialism – but it contains more elements of socialism than the alternatives of bailouts or nationalisation. It is a suggestion that could be applied in the here and now, where a social revolution is currently unlikely. If our position is one of revolutionary purity then it will be unlikely that anyone will pay much attention to us and if a revolt does break out then our influence will be smaller than it could be if we addressed social issues today.

If done in the right way, such activity can be used to get us closer to our immediate aim – a libertarian social movement which uses direct action and solidarity to change society for the better.

What of the notion it is 'worker capitalism'? This is confused. It is not capitalist because workers own and control their own means of production. If quoting Engels is not too out of place, the "object of production – to produce commodities – *does not import* to the instrument the character of capital" for the "production of commodities is one of the preconditions for the existence of capital ... as long as the producer sells only

what he himself produces, he is not a capitalist; he becomes so only from the moment he makes use of his instrument to *exploit the wage labour of others*". So workers' associations are not capitalist, as Marx also made clear.

This is Proudhon's distinction between property and possession and he placed workers' associations at the heart of his anarchism, considering them as "a protest against the wage system" and a "denial of the rule of capitalists". As long as these associations remained democratic (i.e., all people who work there are members) then this is a socialisation of the means of life (albeit, currently within capitalism). The key to understanding socialisation is to remember that it is fundamentally about access, that every one has the same rights to the means of life as everyone else.

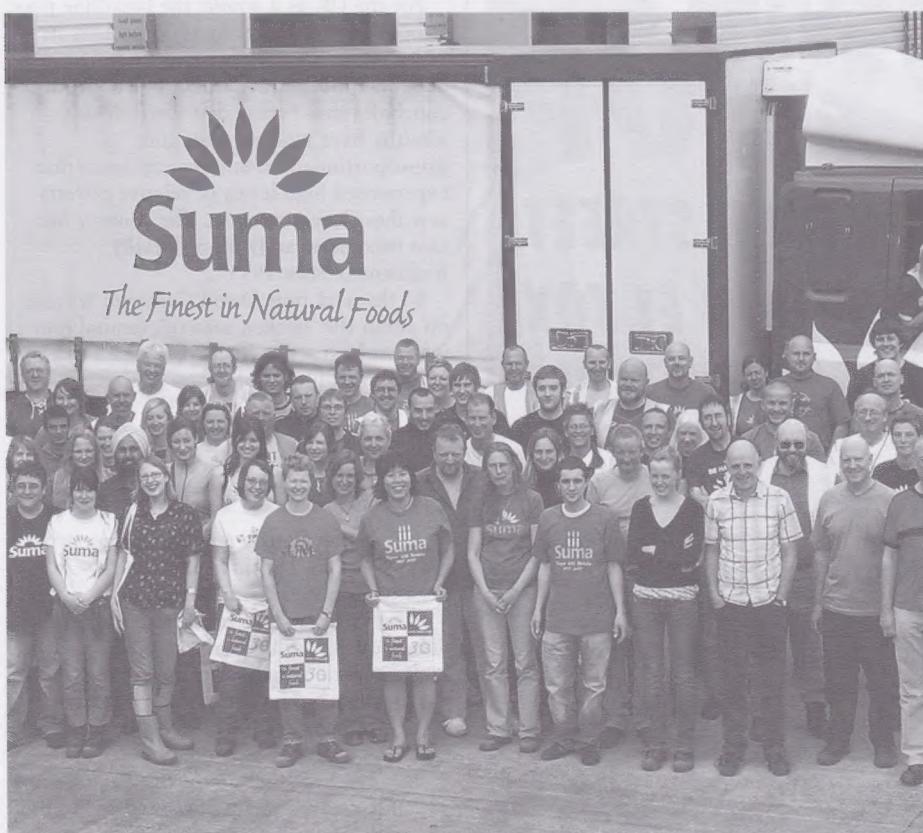
This was Proudhon's position, that "every individual employed in the association ... has an undivided share in the property of the company", has "the right to fill any position, of any grade, in the company, according to the suitability of sex, age, skill, and length of employment" and that "all positions are elective, and the by-laws subject to the approval of the members". Bakunin was also a firm supporter of cooperatives, as was Kropotkin – although both were clear about their limitations.

This should be the criteria for any bailouts suggested now – the turning of the company into a co-operative which is run by its members and which any new workers are automatically members with the same rights as others.

Of course, it is unlikely that any government will agree to such a socialisation of companies. Unless pressurised from below, they will pick bailouts or (part/full) nationalisation in order to keep capitalism going. If ignored then people should simply socialise their workplaces themselves by occupying and running them directly. Nor should this be limited to simply those firms seeking bailouts. All workplaces in danger of being closed should be occupied – which will hopefully inspire *all* workers to do the same.

This support for co-operatives should be seen as a practical response to current events, a means of spreading the anarchist message and getting people to act for themselves. At the very least, it helps people who are suffering from the crisis while, at the same time, showing that another world is possible. And it is doubtful that the people whose jobs and communities are on the line because of the decisions of their bosses can make any more of a mess than has already been inflicted on them!

But this is a short-term libertarian solution to the crisis, one that can be used to help create something better. Capitalism has failed. It is time to give economic liberty a go!



Some of the Suma Wholefoods workers' cooperative on its 30th birthday

Co-ops or conflicts?

Joseph Kay argues for the latter

Nationalisation has long been a staple demand of the left, but now that an unprecedented nationalisation of the banking system has failed to lead to socialism, anarchist arguments that state control offers nothing to the working class would appear to have been vindicated.

This creates an opportunity to put forward anarchist ideas not as a critical comment on the left, but as proposals in their own right. Against the demand for nationalisation of troubled firms, many have raised the demand for workers control. This demand is no less problematic, for two reasons.

Firstly, and not insignificantly, we are in no position to demand anything. As a tiny minority in the class, our 'calls' for this or that are impotent cries. Nationalisation of the banks didn't happen because MPs heeded the calls of various Trotskyist groups, but because of a material need to prevent a banking collapse and the consequent economic collapse, falling of profits and danger of social unrest this would entail.

The only way our demands can become a necessity for capital to follow is if they are backed by a class movement capable of imposing them. To call for this or that in the absence of such class power is to get ahead of ourselves; there are more pressing matters at hand. We will return to this in a moment.

The second problem is on a more fundamental level. While many are aware that workers' control under capitalism is simply self-managed exploitation, the demand is still often raised as a sort of intermediate, 'realistic' demand short of revolution. However like nationalisation, workers' control is not a demand based on our concrete material needs as a class, it is about how capital should be managed.

Capital cannot be managed in our interests, so it is pointless to try. Instead we have to make concrete material demands; no to job losses, wage cuts, public service cuts and evictions; and jumping further ahead of ourselves, for wage increases, shorter hours for no loss of pay, improved public services, etc.

Self-managed exploitation is not just a neat turn of phrase, it is a recognition of how capital rules social life. It does this both vertically through the person of the boss, and horizontally, through market forces. Many anarchists focus mainly on the vertical rule of workplace hierarchy, and so see workers' control as a stepping stone towards libertarian communism.

However, it's not a stepping stone, but a cul-de-sac. For example, I work in financial

Tea Break

Irregular workers bulletin

July 2008

Hundreds of thousands say: "Enough is enough!"



The past few months have seen strikes can strengthen the bonds between us

services. As you would expect during a financial crisis, we're feeling the squeeze. There have been redundancies, and the 'lucky' survivors are being made to work harder and longer to make up. If we were to turn it into a co-op, those same market forces causing my boss to make cuts would still be there, but we would have nobody to say no too when under pressure to increase the rate of exploitation to survive in a hostile market.

Of course, using the director's former salaries we might be able to make less redundancies or improve wages. But if the firm has the resources to do this, and we would only be able to create a co-op with sufficiently strong class struggle to force expropriation of the bosses, *we should simply demand the concrete material things we want* – in this case job security and improved conditions – *not demand how capital should be managed* to meet our actual needs.

Success in establishing a co-op is success in swapping one form of alienation for another, proletarian for *petit-bourgeois*. But there is a reason workers are a potentially revolutionary class and small business people are not: class antagonism. When capital makes demands of bosses via market forces, they have to impose them on workers, and workers can resist. Workers' needs are in direct contradiction to the needs of capital accumulation.

However, if we become our own boss, we have no-one to refuse and the needs of capital appear as the natural imperative of market forces. Class struggle – and with it

Local government

As well as their July strike, council workers also struck across the country on April 24th, with 20,000 across all local government unions striking in Birmingham alone. 100,000 Scottish council workers in Unison are being balloted separately for strike action rejecting a 2.5% per year offer.

Education

Further education lecturers in the UCU struck on April 24th over pay and Welsh further education lecturers are being balloted separately as part of the same dispute, improving the offer from 2.45% to 3.2% (though below inflation, the union recommended accepting). Meanwhile, 250,000 teachers in the NUT struck on April 24th and balloted for discontinuous action, possibly coinciding with more local government strikes in October. 1,000 Ofsted inspectors in Unison and PCS also struck together over pay in May.

the potential for revolutionary change – is short-circuited. Ends are made of means, some means get us closer to what we want, others make it more remote and finally destroy its possibility.

So what is a libertarian communist response to the crisis? Communist demands are concrete, material demands reflecting our needs as workers. To be in a position to make these demands, we need to have a level of working class power and confidence that is presently lacking. Therefore our activity should be aimed at increasing the confidence, power and combativity of the wider class.

The *Tea Break* workers' bulletin is one such project to this end, it advocates libertarian communist tactics to achieve concrete material gains.

These tactics are the advocacy of collective action, for militant workers to network with one another online or face to face, for mass meetings including all workers regardless of union membership to control the struggle (excluding managers and scabs of course), and for links to be made between workers divided by workplace, sector, union, agency/permanent contracts and the manifold other divisions currently present (nationality, gender...).

As a concrete project aimed at spreading libertarian communist tactics and demands and increasing the power and confidence of the class, it is at least a small but definite step in the right direction.

Joseph Kay is a member of the Solidarity Federation and libcom.org collective.

FEATURE

Public pay in 2008

Freedom interviews workplace activist John Stevens

Freedom: This year's big public sector pay disputes seemed to be gearing up for a fight, then fizzled out. What happened?

John Stevens: I think they were doomed from the start. In a similar situation to last year, the unions divided up the affected workers into lots of separate, small, easily defeated units. In some areas, where workers weren't so organised, workers were encouraged to accept pay cuts by the unions, like Unison in the health service.

After that, the next biggest group of workers in local government were demobilised with the union clearly attempting to scare people off taking action. Then when they eventually saw that they would have to call a strike to save face, they organised just one stoppage, of two days, with no dates for future action set. The national union made hardly any effort to get people to observe the strike, although some local branches did.

So after the initial action, workers were just left for months while 'talks' went on between the union and the employers, with no pressure actually being exerted on the employers by dates for future walkouts. So by the time that the employers had refused to improve their offer, and the union began a half-arsed consultation exercise to gauge support for further action it came back negative from a workforce which had been demoralised by months of inaction.

Apart from those, some of the large, more militant sectors such as teachers and the civil service have just been left completely isolated.

So where do you think this leaves people in terms of having a Plan B?

Well I don't think it will be easy. The unfortunate truth is that unless workers have faith in anything else other than our own power and initiative, we will be defeated.

If we want to oppose these attacks on our living standards, we need as much as possible to begin to organise together, ourselves – across the boundaries of unions, employers, sectors, employment status, nationality, etc.

Disputes which are led by union officials will not be successful, because their interests are not the same as the workers that they 'represent'.

There's a tendency from union chiefs to blame a lack of motivation in the general workforce for the lack of strike action, how accurate do you think this is?

Well, there is some truth to it. But it is far from the full story. Most people make decisions to do things on a rational basis, weighing up the costs and benefits. People are not very keen to lose pay in taking industrial action which will not be successful. The actions organised by most of the unions, one-off strikes, often called off at a drop of the government's hat, are ineffective at gaining improvements, or even staving off further attacks.

That, combined with what is the enormous problem of workers in this country having suffered over 20 years of defeat and so having their collective organisation in disarray means that it is difficult to build support for strike action. But, as I've outlined, much of this is the result of the actions of the unions themselves.

From a personal point of view, at my work, we did not have trouble getting people to strike. Many people joined the union in the run-up to our strike on July (over 100 in our department alone), and lots of people were really looking forward to striking, and taking on the government.

After months of delaying, and then the onset of the financial crisis, it would be more difficult to build support for further action, I'm sure. Especially as it became obvious that the union leadership was not fighting our corner.

You personally are in Unison, which has been accused through its inactivity of putting a dampener in general on public sector union activity. Would you agree with that?

Well, it's not just inactivity. Unison, together with Unite, actively blocked attempts at the TUC Congress to get coordinated strike action. This doesn't excuse the other unions however, they fundamentally all act in the same way, but with some changes depending on what they have to do to maintain their positions of influence and size.

Basically, they all act as a brake on their membership. But if there is enough mood for action in the membership, then they will pay lip service to militancy (our general secretary Dave Prentis quoted Marx in his conference speech this year) and organise action when they cannot stop it. But then often try to make the action as ineffective as possible.

In different sectors different unions positions are slightly different, but their roles are fundamentally the same. For example, Unison is the largest union in local government where workers are marginally more militant than health so it responds by acting slightly more militant. The GMB which is very small effectively acts as a no-strike union for managers and others who don't want to strike (however, there are some exceptions to this, especially in the manual grades). In the NHS where workers are generally less militant, Unison as the largest union acts in quite an aggressive anti-worker way, and so to recruit members the much smaller GMB positions itself as the more militant union.

Despite this, and GMB members massive rejection of their three-year pay deal in the NHS, the union still refused to organise any action.

Can you say more about the sort of sabotage which has taken place?

Well in the NHS for the past two years Unison nationally has refused to recommend rejection of pay cuts for NHS workers. This is serious sabotage, as most members usually follow the recommendation of the unions. In the NHS this year, 60% of Unison members accepted their three-year deal. Members of Unite and the GMB, which recommended



Teachers on strike in April 2008



Local government workers rally over pay in Edinburgh, October 2008

rejection of the pay cuts then rejected the same deal with votes of 95% or more.

Not only did Unison nationally refuse to recommend rejection of the deal, but it forbade individual branches from making recommendations, and threatened disciplinary action against those that did.

In local government the sabotage was more low-key, but there were constant delays, the dates chosen for the strike were very poor, in the last week of term and this had been fed back as a problem by members in schools. The consultation material sent to members actually gave the employers arguments as to why a pay rise couldn't be afforded without rebutting them, etc.

But it's important to note that things are no different when the bureaucrats are from the 'left'. The NUT national executive is controlled by the left now and they called off their industrial action following a majority vote in favour of it the other week. 'Revolutionary socialists' on the executive of the CWU voted to call off their strikes last year, etc.

What do you think of the rumblings over inflation and the three-year deals?

Well, in local government we at least managed to stop our three-year deal. In the NHS, however, it has already been signed with the backing of Unison and the RCN. About two weeks after it was signed, Unison started talking tough about reopening the offer because inflation had increased. But it's just hot air.

The burgeoning recession will have a big impact on this. Some workers in recent pay disputes expressed concern that they did not want to be seen as being greedy for more pay at a time when many people were losing their jobs and homes, from a misguided sense of solidarity.

Furthermore, the damp squib of last year's pay disputes, combined with the more clear defeats of this year may scare people off taking further action next year. But whether these will have a significant impact remains to be seen. A more important factor in what happens next year will probably be the cost of living.

What are you expecting for next year's pay deals?

I think a key issue here will be the rate of inflation. Of course, for those that don't

have pre-signed deals the government will try to impose rises below inflation again. If we do enter a period of deflation, then this leads to the real prospect of actual pay cuts, which will very obviously be pay cuts as people will see the numbers on their pay slips go down. This will undoubtedly provoke resistance.

What has been the feeling over the proposals in the budget to cut huge chunks – £5bn a year – out of the public sector to help pay for Darling's spending plans?

Cuts in public spending will exacerbate pressures on public sector workers. They will also involve widespread redundancies. This will provoke struggle, but again workers' prospects of success will depend on how much we get together and try to set the agenda ourselves.

The dangers of following the union line have been shown in recent disputes where unions have voted to trade off pay cuts against job losses.

John Stevens is a Unison convenor in local government, and an editor of libcom.org

FEATURE

From roads to runways ... the

Freedom talks to long-time campaigners

There has been a huge amount of speculation over the true extent of shadowy anarchists and eco-terrorists in the Climate Camp and environmental direct action movements.

From hilariously out-of-date stories in the *Daily Telegraph* in 2007 about a planned takeover of Heathrow by anarchist direct actionists the Wombles (impressive for a group which had folded years before), to police attempts to link Kingsnorth climate campers to weaponry 'found' in a forest this year, there has been a tension between the generally fluffy green movement and detractors desperate to pin an evil face on it.

Most recently, the *Observer* ran an article on the likelihood of eco-terrorism coming from Earth First! – a non-hierarchical radical green grouping – which was so poorly researched that the paper was eventually forced to retract the entire article.

Yet within the flailing around by reporters looking for a juicy scoop there is a kernel of truth. There are people who have been active for a long time, who were instrumental in founding the Climate Camp, and who are anarchists.

Many of these came from the road protest movement of the '90s, and have been involved in organising for a range of activities since.

Freedom spoke to some of these campaigners about a thread which can be drawn through the last two decades of activism, culminating

in the Climate Camp and a new generation of green activity.

"I was very involved in the early days of the road protest movement" one explained. "It didn't start off as an overtly anti-capitalist thing, and afterwards as a lot of the people who were involved moved on to other campaigns, an analysis developed of how things needed to change and by the end of it, certainly within the Earth First! strand, an anarchist and anti-capitalist analysis had emerged.

"As the road protests declined a lot of that energy went into summit-hopping, big set piece things like the G8 protests, J18 and the GM food campaigning – often it was the same people.

"There was always a climate analysis in the anti roads stuff. Although coal stuff happened back then, particularly around anti-opencasting with the NUM it was less about climate.

"Now it's a much more explicit climate change angle, which is where the camp came from with a different front end but a similar analysis, saying that capitalism is not sustainable and may threaten human survival. To that extent the Climate Camp was bringing the same analysis and came from the same place but saw a different way to present it.

"As a tactic it was quite ambitious but it wasn't particularly new – big camps leading to an action had been done before, just not that big."

The tactic has been both successful and in some ways extremely difficult for the organisers, bringing in hundreds, perhaps thousands of people and exposing them to

radical ideas both in terms of green thinking and anarchist organising techniques.

For the old hands though there has been some frustration as their models of working together have clashed with incomers, whose preconceptions and culture have on occasion been very different.

One organiser noted: "A lot of people have reacted strongly coming in as new faces, and usually very positively. But the development and support work hasn't been strong enough, for example that many people new to consensus decision making having to learn it from scratch. We need to do more introduction and training, I suppose. Otherwise, there is a risk of dilution of the culture, and a loss of horizontalism. Consensus done badly is a bad thing, it ends up as an illusion of consensus. We have to understand that this stuff is very new to most people, as it was once new to most of us.

"And there's a lot of the radical end of the reforming movement have come in and there's been overlap at the edges – in some ways there's been a feeling for a while now that continuing doing the camp is a bad idea – that it's no longer creating political space and has become a place where people who think they're radical go to spend their summer so they can get a bit more street cred.

"Then the police response, which was very extreme for this country – though nothing like as bad as elsewhere in the world – did radicalise loads of people, but some didn't make the wider connections, they saw it as an aberration, not as a logical and coordinated response by the state, there was very much a strand of 'make poverty history' type thought.



CLASHES: Protesters at Solsbury Hill in 1994.

green veterans

The flip side is that the experience of camp has injected some radical thought, and radicalised people, into that type of organisation, organisations like People and Planet I suppose.

"But some people are picking stuff up and that's really good – a lot of the students we're seeing taking direct action now are the same kids who walked out of school during the gulf war."

This radicalising of a new generation has in many ways given the green activist movement a shot in the arm, with a recent example of the influx of younger groups being the recent day of student action against energy company E.ON, and the activities of Plane Stupid.

However our interviewees warn against anyone thinking that this amounts to older greens directing a larger organisation:

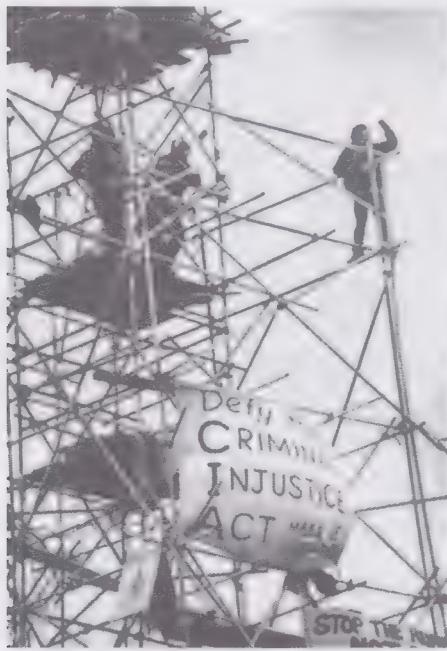
"There's been a lot of action around E.ON attacking them for their support of coal which is making itself felt in the student movement – but the student groups are their own entities with their own identities.

"There's no overall organisation. In any situation where there's no secretariat or organising body, above a certain size it begins to fragment and you end up with sub-communities where it becomes difficult to link closely.

"There's always been some shying away from building an umbrella movement I think.

"There's an element of a generation moving through time and there's an element of continuity, but not hugely – there's not been a lot of cross-over yet. Take Plane Stupid – they didn't come out of the roads-protest continuity, they borrowed ideas from it and did their own thing, which is great."

As the conversation turns towards alliances and antagonism with the workers' movement,



No M11 at Claremont Road, 1994



Picture: Andy Mitford (flickr.com)

the issue of Kingsnorth and the coal question is raised. Arguments have been rife between sections of the green movement and the coalfield reds of the NUM.

"Coal is an interesting one. There are people across the movement who just don't get it and are simply saying there should be no more coal – which is an over-simplification.

"George Monbiot flirts with nuclear, which most greens reject, and that has confused a lot of people who see him as some green leader. But he's a journalist and peripheral as an activist, which confuses the left, who don't understand that there is no party line. As far as the leave it in the ground campaign goes it's avowedly anti-nuke.

"Coal comes down to one thing 'can we do it clean'. And we can't. Until we can, we have to oppose it. The comrades have to get their heads around the fact that a climate collapse would probably end in a form of fascism which will leave no room for an NUM. There's this crusade of 'we must have clean coal', and they can't countenance that it might not work. Even if it does, I can't see the state letting us go back to Saltley Gates,¹ as much as the NUM may want to. There'd have to be a wider debate on the nature of coal in that context, its ownership and its sources, all of that."

"But a lot of people see coal as an inevitable part of a transition, and while that happens,

coal should be UK deep-mined.

"The vast majority of the environmental movement agrees with the NUM on 80% of its arguments, on imports, open casting, etc., but the knee-jerk responses on both sides need to be got around.

"The NUM have more to lose than the environmental movement does if we can't co-operate, but we would lose out too. But we'll see where that goes because Dave Douglass² wants to get people together for talks. In the last debate in Newcastle there was a certain amount of progress."

As we move into 2009, there has been much debate over the next Climate Camp – and whether the green veterans should continue to put their efforts into something which may already be beginning to fall into the trap of the World Social Forum by becoming a jolly weekend for the middle classes. It seems the discussion is still in its early stages.

"There's a continual debate going on over where we go next after the Kingsnorth blockade. Something has to be developed here but it's people kicking ideas around at the moment."

Rob Ray

1 One of the great miners' victories of the 1970s.

2 An influential anarcho-syndicalist miner and agitator.

FEATURE

IMAGES OF AFGHANISTAN



1 On every street corner in every market and bazaar in Kabul men and women missing one or both legs beg from passers by. It is estimated that between five and ten million land mines remain buried in Afghanistan. Aside from the human cost, the amount of land rendered unusable by these devices causes economic hardship to millions. The expertise required to remove them can only come from outside the country though the present situation leaves little hope of this happening any time soon.

2 In the abandoned former Soviet Cultural Palace up to 1,000 Afghans smoke and inject dirt-cheap heroin every day. Possibly the biggest shooting gallery in the world there is no intervention by the authorities. Seeing is believing. Although an opium

producer for over 100 years, heroin use has not previously been part of Afghan culture. It was produced in small amounts in the 80s by the Mujahadeen to give to Russian soldiers. One thing I noticed was the large number of users who were disabled or using crutches and were clearly suffering from back or mobility problems. My guide pointed out that in Kabul heroin is cheaper than healthcare.

3 You could have been forgiven for thinking in 2001 that the main motive for invading Afghanistan was to liberate oppressed women. On the streets of Kabul there is little evidence to suggest that women are able to fulfil their aspirations. Even shops selling women's clothing are all run by men. The only women I saw openly earning



money during my short visit were those who were forced by poverty to beg from strangers.

4 One aspect of the war getting little coverage is the refugee situation. On the edge of the city I visited a camp that was home to 900 families on the brink of starvation. They had fled their homes in Helmand and Kandahar when their villages had become battlefields between NATO and the Taleban. Since arriving in Kabul they had received little or no support and were furious with their government and the occupation forces. Children were dying of curable diseases and some cases



AN BY GUY SMALLMAN



were being sold into servitude by parents desperate to save the rest of the family. It is estimated that at least 235,000 Afghans have been displaced by the fighting and a famine is predicted in the country this winter.

5 The Afghan government were hoping to attract back the travellers and traders so vital to the economy in the 1960s and '70s. The worsening security situation and a nearby bombing has ensured that the carpet and rug bazaar is all but deserted.

6 I was surprised to meet Pakistani refugees in Kabul. They lived in a camp of over 300



7 Public transport in Kabul is inefficient, overcrowded and an all-male affair.

8 Kabul has long been lauded as a success story in bringing peace and democracy to a dictatorship. The feeling on the streets is very different to that portrayed by the US and its allies. The city is completely militarised by Afghan Police, Army and private security guards. Many come across as being young, poorly trained and easily panicked. Corruption at every level of government also ensures that wages regularly go unpaid so many are reported to be joining the Taleban or



9 extorting money off the very people they are supposed to be protecting.



GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

The Tarnac Nine

The Tarnac Nine are a group of prisoners in France accused of sabotaging railway lines. Here their parents talk of their imprisonment:

"When all the media come together in a cacophony of lies to slander a handful of young people currently languishing in jail it is very difficult to find the right tone with which to call an end to this racket and make room for a little truth."

"Many journalists bent over backwards to confirm the statements of the Minister of the Interior, even while the raids were still taking place. Those arrested were assumed to be guilty from the outset."

"Our children have evidently benefitted from a special treatment, locked in darkness for 108 hours, some of them without any charges, and to justify this we are told that they must be very special people, the kind that one doesn't find on any street corner. Yet at the same time we are reminded that they are actually very normal, for everyday they become more numerous, and take up positions at every one of your street corners."

"The police reproach our children being too organised, attempting to provide locally for their basic needs, reopening a village grocery store which had closed down, cultivating abandoned lands, organising the distribution of food to old people in their area. Is it evil to self-organise for your basic needs? Here, when we have heard wind of crisis?

"Let us return to the suspicions levelled against our children. Contrary to what has been said, and what we might think, the sabotage of railway lines did not terrorise the population or put anyone in danger. It simply caused the population to lose or kill time. What did terrorise the government was not the fact that it had to reimburse a thousand or so train tickets, but that an idea of politics, which was also an idea of action, ceaselessly reproduced itself."

"Bankers are responsible for the biggest economic crisis of the last eighty years. This will not fail to cause millions of people to starve. And we continue to cordially greet our bankers in the street. Our children are only suspected of causing the delay of a few trains, and for that they face twenty years in prison."

"The most impressive police operation in the last week was not bursting open doors in balaclavas on a sleeping nine-month-old baby, but rather convincing people that the desire to change such a perfect world could only emanate from the heads of the mentally deranged, of powerful assassins."

"When doors slam we feel fear that it is the balaclavas returning."

"When they open we dream of seeing our children return."

The parents of Bertrand, Mathieu, Elsa, Aria and Yldune



● Early this month energy giant E.on found itself targeted across the UK by climate campaigners calling for an end to new coal power stations.

Campaigners said: "Overall, the 48 hours of action was a great first shot across the bows. E.On were rattled, local and national media took an interest, resources were gathered and are now ready to go, a new website is now up and running, a list of targets has been compiled and E.on know that if they try to build a new coal fired power station at Kingsnorth then they will face a barrage of direct action – both towards their daily operations and their supply chain. E.on be warned."

Protests took place in London, Brighton, Bristol, Norwich, Coventry and Nottingham (pictured above).

For more information visit e-on-off.org.uk

● On Tuesday 9th December, members of the London Coalition Against Poverty successfully defended a single mother's right to housing.

About a dozen people accompanied her to file an application, and at a subsequent meeting with housing officers her application was accepted.

This typical example of LCAP's direct action casework means that one more family won't be made homeless during the freezing winter months. LCAP is working on issues such as Jobcentre mismanagement, council 'gatekeeping' of housing resources from homeless persons, supporting mistreated

workers and organising with people living in temporary accommodation.

For more information, see www.lcap.org.uk

● Freedom March is the title of a month-long programme of events being held in Worthing next March. The full programme has yet to be unveiled, but will definitely include a protest against the "insidious creep of a police state" – from ID cards to CCTV and town wardens – meeting at 2pm on Saturday 14th March outside Worthing Town Hall in Chapel Road. Anyone who wants to join in by organising their own event on the freedom theme (anything from a 'freedom to knit' evening to a talk or protest) to be included in the official programme should contact freedommarch@hushmail.com

● A new social centre is developing near Birmingham City Centre. Justice Not Crisis have moved on from their squatted Cllr John Lines homeless village into the Firebird pub, on the local Benmore estate. The protest has become much more than a housing demonstration, say the residents: "It's a response to the lack of youth provision, community provision and the lack of communal spaces for people to meet without the need to spend money."

Since entering the pub the group has been cleaning up, inside and out, making it safe and secure. Free advice on debt, benefits and housing is being offered to local residents, a fireplace has been built from recycled materials found on-site and a library has been started. For more see justicenotcrisis.wordpress.com

Noam Chomsky

Avram Noam Chomsky is an American linguist, philosopher, cognitive scientist, political activist, author, and lecturer. He is an Institute Professor emeritus and professor emeritus of linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Well known in the academic and scientific community as the founder of modern linguistics, Chomsky has, since the 1960s, achieved more widespread recognition as a political dissident, activist, anarchist and libertarian socialist intellectual.

Chomsky was born on 7th December 1928 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Between 1951 and 1955 he was a Junior Fellow of the Harvard University Society of Fellows, during which time he completed his doctoral dissertation entitled 'Transformational Analysis'. He received his PhD from the University of Pennsylvania in 1955 and joined the staff of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology the same year. In 1961 he was appointed full professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics.

In February 1967, Chomsky became one of the leading opponents of the Vietnam War with the publication of his essay, 'The Responsibility of Intellectuals' in *The New York Review of Books*. This was followed in 1969 by his book, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, a collection of essays which established him as a prominent critic of US foreign policy. Chomsky's far-reaching criticisms of US foreign policy and the legitimacy of US power centre on his claims of double standards in a foreign policy preaching democracy and freedom while promoting, supporting and allying itself with non-democratic and repressive states. Chomsky argues that this results in massive human rights violations, and that US intervention in foreign nations, including the secret aid given to the Contras in Nicaragua, an event of which he has been staunchly critical, is consistent with any standard description of terrorism.

Chomsky's political work is underpinned by two main themes, namely that the reasons and motives for the restriction of the human potential of the majority of humankind have to be examined, ascertained and exposed, and that the means by which the reality of this restriction is disguised – the means by which the majority of humankind are ignorant of their ideological and political incarceration – also have to be identified and exposed. In his books *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (1988), *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (1989), *Deterring Democracy* (1992) and *Keeping The Rabble in Line* (1994), Chomsky argues that key sectors of the doctrinal system serve to divert the unwashed masses and reinforce the values of passivity, submissiveness to authority, lack of concern for others, fear of real or imagined enemies, the virtue of greed and personal gain etc. "The goal" he writes, "is to keep the bewildered herd bewildered.



It's unnecessary for them to trouble themselves with what's happening in the world. In fact, it's undesirable – if they see too much of reality they may set themselves to change it".

According to Chomsky, the mass media in the United States largely serve as a propaganda arm of government and corporations. In *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (co-authored with Edward S. Herman), Chomsky presents what he calls the 'Propaganda Model', designed to "trace out the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalise dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their message across to the public". The Propaganda Model alleges systemic biases in the mass media and seeks to explain these biases in terms of structural economic causes. According to Chomsky, before it can be deemed fit for publication the "raw material of news" has to pass through various different "filters", ultimately leaving only the "cleansed residue fit to print". Chomsky and Herman argue that the theory is applicable to any country which shares the basic economic structure and organising principles postulated by the model as the cause of media biases.

Critical of capitalism, bureaucracy and state power, Chomsky has described his own "personal visions [as] fairly traditional anarchist ones, with origins in The Enlightenment and classical liberalism". He has also aligned himself with libertarian socialism and anarcho-syndicalism and is a member of

the IWW. Unless it can be explicitly justified, Chomsky argues, authority is inherently illegitimate; the burden of proof rests on those occupying positions of authority to demonstrate why their elevated situation is justified. If this burden cannot be met, the authority in question should be dismantled.

Equally, there is little substantive difference between slavery and renting oneself to an owner, or 'wage slavery', both of which are attacks on personal integrity which destroy and undermine our individual freedom and self-determination. "Personally I'm in favour of democracy" Chomsky stated in 1973, "which means that the central institutions in the society have to be under popular control. Now, under capitalism we can't have democracy by definition. Capitalism is a system in which the central institutions of society are in principle under autocratic control. Thus, a corporation or an industry is, if we were to think of it in political terms, fascist; that is, it has tight control at the top and strict obedience has to be established at every level – there's a little bargaining, a little give and take, but the line of authority is perfectly straightforward. Just as I'm opposed to political fascism, I'm opposed to economic fascism. I think that until major institutions of society are under the popular control of participants and communities, it's pointless to talk about democracy."

A collection of Chomsky's writings on anarchism entitled *Chomsky on Anarchism* was published by AK Press in 2006.

James Horrox

OBITUARIES

Harold H. Thompson



US anarchist Harold H. Thompson died on 11th November 2008 in a Tennessee prison, aged 66, where he was serving life without parole. Harold accepted that he would never be free and, with the help of well-wishers and supporters worldwide, including many *Freedom* readers, Harold did his best to lead a pro-active, anarchist-driven existence from within the confinement of steel and concrete walls. Never an easy task given the age-old class enemy of authority, petty vindictive bureaucracy and, perhaps worst of all, hostile sectarian gangs who prey on anyone not subscribed to their sick mindset. Harold could not stand prejudice or bullying, calling the perpetrators 'class clowns' as he fought daily battles with the racist thugs, often at the cost of placing his own safety in jeopardy.

He was subjected to the precariousness of survival only a couple of years ago, when he was beaten to within an inch of his life by a gang of White Aryan Supremacists. He was hospitalised, but the callousness of the US correctional system meant that he never fully recovered from this and previous assaults. This last occasion there was incontrovertible

evidence of collusion between the aggressors and prison personnel for which Harold was pursuing through the courts. The point is that none of the violence sustained, and there was much, deterred Harold from his work to guide the indigent, the illiterate, the downtrodden, any ethnicity or maligned minority. That was what the class traitors couldn't figure about him: his undiminished willingness to come to the aid of anyone who wasn't a racist, rapist or child molester. It bugged them and Harold knew he must watch his back every single day. To his great credit, he bowed the knee to none of them.

Harold witnessed first-hand the brutalities of American imperialism, not only in the 'gulags' (as he not-so-fondly termed them) but also serving in Vietnam, where he was wounded under fire. It was an unnecessary, pointless war – aren't they all once the dust has settled? – disillusioning many of the combatants, including Harold who went on to adopt the more humane ethics of anarchism from which he would never thereafter deviate.

How come he ended up sentenced without parole? Harold made no secret of the fact he had terminated the life of the man who had murdered his partner, the mother of his son. This action drew a life term, ostensibly with distant chance of release far into the future. Harold blew all that away in an attempted armed escape, earning himself in the process an additional few score years. Resigned to his fate, Harold had made arrangements for his remains to be shipped to Ireland, where his parents came from, for disposal. Hopefully this final request will be respected.

Harold didn't always receive the support he deserved from the so-called anarchist community. Disappointingly, a negative response came from two prickly US ABC

groups who, in their zeal to appear paragons of prissy political correctness, refused aid to Harold when approached. It was a bitter pill to swallow but, typically, he just got on with business. Britain's (then) Anarchist Communist Federation were asked to carry out an independent investigation into the matter and duly came to the conclusion that the insinuations bore no substance.

Preceding this nonsense, Friends of Harold H. Thompson (FOHHT) in the UK had been re-formed where, with the ready help of many *Freedom* readers, a support network was put in place to enable Harold mount his challenges to the US legal system, one major issue being the outright denial to inmates of anarchist reading material. It proved a successful outcome for prisoners across the USA.

Harold wrote a number of libertarian pamphlets, took up painting and engaged in protracted correspondence with comrades near and far, of which this writer is one – a privilege held dear for almost twelve long years, although, of course, with Harold's passing now not nearly so long enough.

Harold will quite genuinely be missed by all whose lives he touched. He was a courageous, talented, inspirational and committed anarchist. To readers of *Freedom* the campaign would like to say thank you to each and every one, for the unflagging encouragement down the years. Harold truly did appreciate it, just as he warmed to the knowledge that there were 'so many out there' determined to take the struggle to the enemy full on. That gave him great comfort without a shadow of doubt. As Harold used to sign off his letters, in his own words: "They'll never get us all!" They won't, Harold, indeed they will not. Rest easy, cherished comrade.

Frankie Dee

Dave Graham (Graham Imray)

Long time activist (though he hated that term) Dave Graham (real name Graham Imray) passed away on the 27th November after contracting a very aggressive disease. Graham had been involved in radical politics for over 40 years, his lifelong commitment no doubt sparked by his presence as a young man at the May 1968 events in Paris and attending the LSE at a time of occupations, student strikes and attempts at assembly democracy.

These early experiences led Gra to discovering the various hidden forms of Marxism that had been buried by the Stalinists and the Trotskyites and to try and bring these to the attention of a wider audience, whilst bringing their central lessons up to date for the modern world. The council communists and the movements for workers councils in Germany after the 1918 revolution opened up a world of working class self-activity ran directly by and for the working class themselves rather than parties or unions.

As part of the Workers Voice group based largely in the car factories on Merseyside, he taught himself German (the first of four languages he learnt) as part of a project to translate and publish material from the KAPD, the GIK and the councilist tradition. He also spent days on end at the British Library photocopying old copies of Sylvia Pankhurst's *Workers Dreadnought* and getting them back into circulation – a really important piece of historical work that was part of a wider rediscovery of radical traditions of the period.

He didn't stop there though, and became interested in what was happening in Italy through the '70s, following the debates around operaismo and autonomism and contemporary class compositions. These debates often seemed to mirror Graham's own life, as he began working for British rail as questions of logistics and 'productive circulation' in modern capital gained relevance, then moving into self-employment as capital started hiving

off its risks onto small operators.

Graham had been doing in-depth research into logistics with another comrade for the last few years that was unfortunately derailed by illness. The Liverpool Dockers dispute saw Gra working around the clock top help and producing some of the most incisive and still relevant work (accessible via libcom library) based around that research.

Graham always played a role in his own community as well as this, he loved his allotment and the idea of communal gardening for use, as well as the teaching which he took up later in life – his students face book page attest to how well loved he was for not doing things the 'proper way', as one comment reads: "Amazing man – genuine and honest – an inspiration. He rejected the staffroom to eat and rest with his pupils – a true teacher, committed to the advancement of his pupils."

Graham leaves a wife, Mal, and two sons, Ian and Andrew. Kaf

150 years of 'libertarian'

2008 marks the 150th anniversary of the use of the word 'libertarian' by anarchists

As is well known, anarchists use the terms 'libertarian', 'libertarian socialist' and 'libertarian communist' as equivalent to 'anarchist' and, similarly, 'libertarian socialism' or 'libertarian communism' as an alternative for 'anarchism'. This is perfectly understandable, as the anarchist goal is freedom, liberty, and the ending of all hierarchical and authoritarian institutions and social relations.

Unfortunately, in the United States the term 'libertarian' has become, since the 1970s, associated with the right-wing, i.e., supporters of 'free-market' capitalism. That defenders of the hierarchy associated with private property seek to associate the term 'libertarian' for their authoritarian system is both unfortunate and somewhat unbelievable to any genuine libertarian. Equally unfortunately, thanks to the power of money and the relative small size of the anarchist movement in America, this appropriation of the term has become, to a large extent, the default meaning there. Somewhat ironically, this results in some right-wing 'libertarians' complaining that we genuine libertarians have 'stolen' their name in order to associate our socialist ideas with it!

The facts are somewhat different. As Murray Bookchin noted, 'libertarian' was "a term created by nineteenth-century European anarchists, not by contemporary American right-wing proprietarians" (*The Ecology of Freedom*, page 57). While we discuss this issue in *An Anarchist FAQ* in a few places, it is useful on the 150th anniversary to discuss the history of anarchist use of the word 'libertarian' to describe our ideas.

The first anarchist journal to use the term 'libertarian' was *La Libertaire, Journal du Mouvement Social*. Somewhat ironically, given recent developments in America, it was published in New York between 1858 and 1861 by French communist-anarchist Joseph Déjacque. The next recorded use of the term was in Europe, when 'libertarian communism' was used at a French regional anarchist Congress at Le Havre (16th to 22nd November 1880). January the following year saw a French manifesto issued on 'Libertarian or Anarchist Communism'. Finally, 1895 saw leading anarchists Sébastien Faure and Louise Michel publish *La Libertaire* in France (Max Nettlau, *A Short History of Anarchism*, pages 75–76, page 145 and page 162).

It should be noted that Nettlau's history was first written in 1932 and revised in 1934. George Woodcock, in his history of anarchism, reported the same facts as regards Déjacque and Faure (*Anarchism: A History of libertarian ideas and movements*, page 233).



Louise Michel

Significantly, Woodcock's account was written in 1962 and makes no mention of right-wing use of the term 'libertarian'. More recently, Robert Graham states that Déjacque's act made "him the first person to use the word 'libertarian' as synonymous with 'anarchist'" while Faure and Michel were "popularising the use of the word 'libertarian' as a synonym for 'anarchist'" (Robert Graham, editor, *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas*, pages 60 and 231).

Which means, incidentally, that Louise Michel is linked with anarchists both using the term 'libertarian' to describe our ideas and with the black flag becoming our symbol. Faure subsequently wrote an article entitled 'Libertarian Communism' in 1903.

In terms of America, we find Benjamin Tucker (a leading individualist anarchist) discussing 'libertarian solutions' to land use in February, 1897. The Individualist Anarchists attacked capitalist (i.e., right-'libertarian') property rights in land as the 'land monopoly' and looked forward to a time when "the libertarian principle to the tenure of land"

was actually applied (*Liberty*, no. 350, page 5). The 1920s saw communist-anarchist Bartolomeo Vanzetti argue that:

"After all we are socialists as the social-democrats, the socialists, the communists, and the IWW are all Socialists. The difference – the fundamental one – between us and all the other is that they are authoritarian while we are libertarian; they believe in a State or Government of their own; we believe in no State or Government" (Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, *The Letters of Sacco and Vanzetti*, page 274).

Interestingly, Rudolf Rocker's 1949 book, published in Los Angeles, states that individualist anarchist Stephan P. Andrews was "one of the most versatile and significant exponents of libertarian socialism" (*Pioneers of American Freedom*, page 85). It should also be noted that 1909 saw the translation into English of Kropotkin's history of the French Revolution in which he argued that "the principles of anarchism ... had their origin ... in the deeds of the Great French Revolution" and "the libertarians would no

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FEATURE

150 years of 'libertarian'

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doubt so the same today" (*The Great French Revolution*, vol. 1, pages 204 and 206).

The most famous use of 'libertarian communism' must be by the world's largest anarchist movement, the anarcho-syndicalist CNT in Spain. After proclaiming its aim to be 'libertarian communism' in 1919, the CNT held its national congress of May 1936 in Zaragoza, with 649 delegates representing 982 unions with a membership of over 550,000. One of the resolutions passed was 'The Confederal Conception of Libertarian Communism' (Jose Peirats, *The CNT in the Spanish Revolution*, vol. 1, pages 103–110). This resolution on libertarian communism was largely the work of Isaac Puente, author of the widely reprinted and translated pamphlet of the same name published four years previously. That year, 1932, also saw the founding of the Federación Ibérica de Juventudes Libertarias (Iberian Federation of Anarchist Youth) in Madrid by anarchists.

The term 'libertarian' has been used by more people than just anarchists, but always to describe socialist ideas close to anarchism. For example, in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s Maurice Brinton and the group he was a member of (Solidarity) described their politics as 'libertarian' and their decentralised, self-managed form of socialism is hard to distinguish from anarchism. So while 'libertarian' did become broader than anarchism, it was still used by people on the left who aimed for socialism.

Unsurprisingly, given this well known and well documented use of the word 'libertarian' by anarchists (and those close to them on the left) to describe their ideas, the use of the

term by supporters of capitalism is deplorable. And it should be resisted. Writing in the 1980s, Murray Bookchin noted that in the United States the "term 'libertarian' itself, to be sure, raises a problem, notably, the specious identification of an anti-authoritarian ideology with a straggling movement for 'pure capitalism' and 'free trade'. This movement never created the word: it appropriated it from the anarchist movement of the [nineteenth] century. And it should be recovered by those anti-authoritarians ... who try to speak for dominated people as a whole, not for personal egotists who identify freedom with entrepreneurship and profit." Thus anarchists in America should "restore in practice a tradition that has been denatured by" the free-market right (*The Modern Crisis*, pages 154–155).

Anarchists tend to use an alternative name for the right-wing 'libertarian', namely 'Propertarian'. Interestingly, Ursula Le Guin used the term in her 1974 classic of anarchist Science-Fiction, *The Dispossessed*. One of the anarchist characters notes that inhabitants of Anarres (the communist-anarchist moon) "want nothing to do with the propertarians" of Urras. Urras is, however, a standard capitalist world (with A-Io representing the United States and Thu representing the Soviet Union) and not explicitly right-'libertarian' in nature. The anarchist protagonist, Shevek, does discover some people who describe themselves as 'libertarian' but these declare themselves close to communist-anarchism (asked whether they are anarchists they reply: "Partly. Syndicalists, libertarians ... anti-centralists"). Shevek, needless to say, is

unimpressed with claims he should visit Thu to see 'socialism', replying that he was well aware how "real socialism functions" (*The Dispossessed*, pages 70, 245 and 118).

It should be noted that 'archist' and 'propertarian' is used pretty much interchangeably in *The Dispossessed* to describe Urras, showing clear understand of, and links to, Proudhon's argument in the first self-labelled anarchist book that property was both 'theft' and 'despotism'. Proudhon argued that "violates equality by the rights of exclusion and increase, and freedom by despotism" and has "perfect identity with robbery" (*What is Property*, page 251). Little wonder French syndicalist Emile Pouget, echoing Proudhon, argued that:

"Property and authority are merely differing manifestations and expressions of one and the same 'principle' which boils down to the enforcement and enshrinement of the servitude of man. Consequently, the only difference between them is one of vantage point: viewed from one angle, slavery appears as a *property crime*, whereas, viewed from a different angle, it constitutes an *authority crime*" (*No Gods, No Masters*, vol. 2, page 66).

So, in summary, considered in terms of our political, social and economics ideas it is unsurprising that anarchists have been using the term 'libertarian' for 150 years. Regardless of the attempts by others ignorant of both the history of that term and the reality of capitalism to appropriate it for their hierarchical and authoritarian ideology, we will continue to do so.

Iain McKay



Federations round-up



Class War Federation

During this year Class War has continued to work in and with Antifa and has concentrated on anti-fascist, propaganda activities and the Class War annual bonfire – which is now firmly established as the largest annual anarchist event in London after the Bookfair.

We started off the year by being the only group to call a counter-protest to the police pay demo, to which the police had invited the BNP's Richard Barnbrook (Tony Benn had to invite himself!). In the run-up to the mayoral elections Class War worked with all of the sections of the London anarchist movement with a pulse to oppose the pathetic mayoral choice offered Londoners. A planned lively evening on 2nd May was interrupted by 22 van loads of the ubiquitous TSG.

Members of Class War also went to the EDO demonstrations, and we've also been active FitWatchers.* During the year members attended bookfairs in Manchester, Dublin, London and Glasgow, and pushed both Class War's newspaper and merchandise at many gigs and festivals across London and the south-east.

We remain concerned, however, that until the anarchist movement develops a firmer base and structures and networks that reflect the numbers attending the London Bookfair, the movement will continue to punch below its weight.

* FIT are the police Forward Intelligence Unit, who monitor and record protests and demonstrations.

Solidarity Federation

The new branch in Liverpool were active around the NUT dispute and in distributing *Education Worker*. We blitzed the Mayday march with more stuff than Labour and the left gave out together. We produced a regional SolFed leaflet for the march against the Labour Party conference. We attended the national, regional and special SolFed conferences and hosted a national Education Workers Network meeting, and most recently took part in the anti-BNP action in Liverpool on 29th November.

In London, we have got involved in LCAP [London Coalition Against Poverty], shop stewards network, and supported various pickets and strikes (Colombia solidarity, NUT, Latin workers at APL, tube cleaners, South London hospitals).

In Brighton, members have contributed to the *Tea Break* agitational newsletter, along with strike support and some leafletting for abortion rights and anti-BNP/government.

Anarchist Federation

2008 has been a big year for the Anarchist Federation with both an unprecedented increase in membership along with a boost in our general activity. We have seen both the formation of new groups (in Cambridge, Norwich and Leeds), but also expansion in our existing collectives along with the welcome return of a strong Scottish network.

We stood in solidarity with the Roma of Italy, staging a demo against the fingerprinting and victimisation of this community by the Italian state. AF members are also still active within the Defy-ID network along with efforts to organise and defend immigrants and asylum seekers.



AF members participated in a vibrant libertarian block at the Labour Party conference against the war, are campaigning on university campuses against military recruitment and arms manufacture and continue to support the actions against the EDO and ITT weapons factory in Brighton. We are of course troubled by the rise of the far-right in this country in the past few years and have fought it building community resistance in our home towns or in active confrontation at the BNP's annual Red, White and Blue festival. Some of our luckier comrades were also able to take a break from all this activity and join our comrades in Carrara to celebrate the 40th anniversary of our international.

Liberty & Solidarity

Liberty & Solidarity has had a busy few months since its founding conference in September. Having created our constitution and formulated our key strategies we have set about getting involved in community and workplace politics across the country. In Glasgow our members have been heavily involved in the *Burgh Angel* community newspaper, whilst in London our activists have been working within London Coalition Against Poverty.

We've also been active within the IWW union nationally, both helping the union to organise within the health sector and helping win key democratic reforms within the union itself.

Over the next year Liberty & Solidarity hopes to build on our current work, we intend to aid the IWW in establishing an Industrial Union in the healthcare sector, as well as fighting for further reform and international expansion. On the community front we aim to help organise ever larger sections of working class communities into fighting, democratic organisations.

IWW

The last year for the IWW has seen the union knuckle down and build upon its sudden emergence in 2007. Continued growth has come with ongoing collective organising, new branches, and an increasingly experienced activist base.

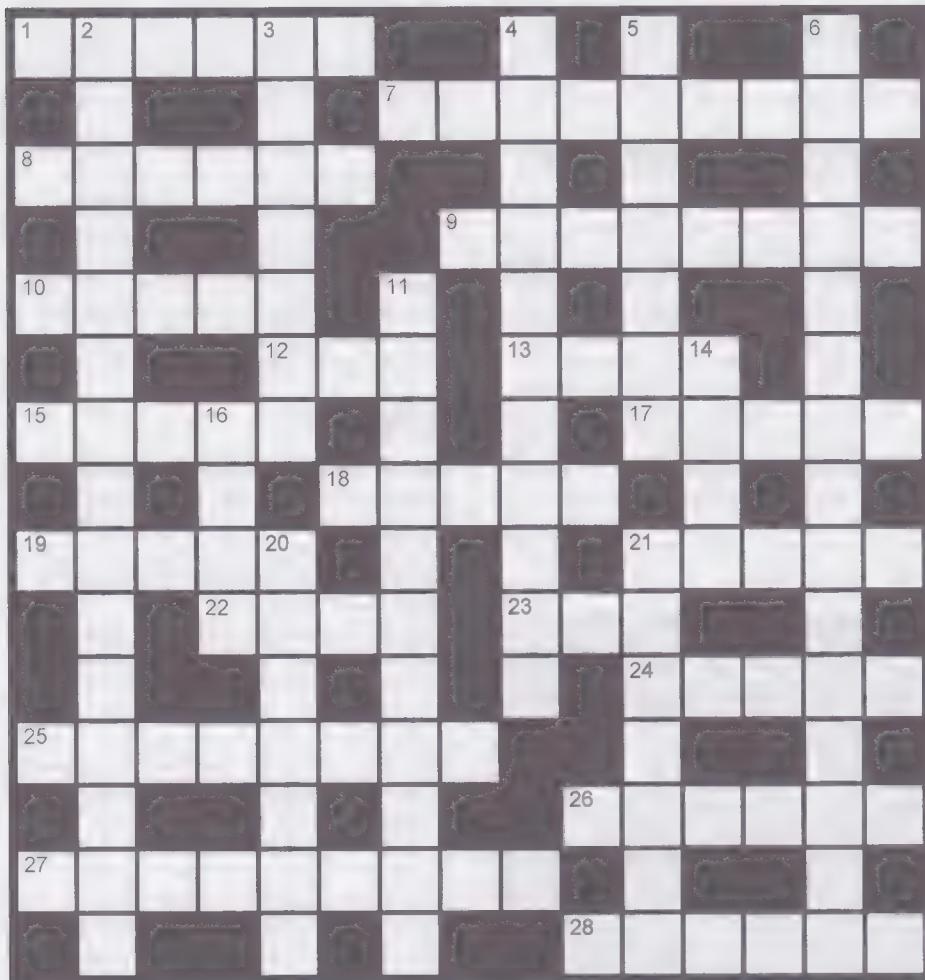
Organising continues in education, with a national freesheet and promising campaigns in the highly casualised EFL sector. Workers at a second print shop in Birmingham have come on board, and the staff at the Showroom Cinema in Sheffield are currently fighting for recognition, despite dirty union-busting from their aggressive and incompetent management. Outreach is also taking place to working students and apprentices in London, along with a promising rank-and-file construction workers network on the horizon. The national campaign to fight cuts in the National Blood Service, although missing its ultimate goal, has built a name for the IWW, and some support for no-nonsense, militant approaches in healthcare. This campaign has now transferred its emphasis towards Scotland, where the Scottish NBS is also planning cuts and job losses.

In the context of the ongoing financial crisis and upcoming recession, IWW members are stepping up a gear in the coming months. We recognise how, now more than ever, working people need to stick together.



PUZZLE

Prize crossword by Bjarni Halfnelson



Across

1 Hasten to get in a riot with recent uprising here (6)
 7 Study of returning cod reproduction getting a hard first in ecological gastronomic process! (4,5)
 8 Debars messy face-fungus traditionally worn by hippies? (6)

9 Impermeable to gas, gets drunk after music starts (8)
 10 Politicians emerging from slovenly lairs! (5)
 12 Mound of archaeological significance part of late lamented site (3)
 13 Anarchist taking part in politburo's arguments (4)

15 Seizure is cut in pieces (5)
 17 Youthful chief fell topless on Stalin's head giving loud cries! (5)
 18 Fox-murderers mythologically patronised by 24ac shut arbitrarily in the north (5)
 19 Writer of fables in Housman's followed by out-patients (5)
 21 Deformed shank gives the old signs of life (5)
 22 I ask drunkenly for Japanese tipple (4)
 23 Signify assent to place of biblical fratricide's exile (3)
 24 So-called "People's Princess" an aid in distress? (5)
 25 Parental confusion during time before birth (8)
 26 Take LSD in charge of low pH? (6)
 27 Ornamental chains make wild scene around lack of new order (9)
 28 Heard an augury to delegate a task (6)

Down

2 Twitcher cheesed off with basic tenet of paganarchy – an it harm done, do what thou wilt! (3,7,5)
 3 Those not wearing clothes hit back about 24ac's middle ground (7)
 4 I ran TNT operation with iron dispersed inside – result not very troublesome! (3-8)
 5 Say it's crazy to follow illogical sect obtaining loved-up dance drug (7)
 6 Pastime of armchair anarchist dreaming of revolution? It's fun whilst hiking around! (7,8)
 11 I call in menu which on further analysis leads to enlightenment (11)
 14 Article confused one for a long time (4)
 16 Staggering of us to disclose these objects beloved of conspiracy theorists (4)
 20 Illustrative story can be coming after standard number of strokes (7)
 21 Cats did so badly they've become physically dependent on something (7)

The Anarchist Quiz Book

Who said "I shit on all the revolutionary vanguards of this planet"? Find out in the new Anarchist Quiz Book from Freedom Press, compiled by Martin Howard and illustrated by Paul Petard.

Some say that it should not be the highest priority of a revolutionary movement to ask itself obscure questions, but it's good fun and if it encourages an enquiring mind to find out more, than all the better. So agitate, educate and organise, all in this very handy question and answer format!

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To win one of *Freedom's* special prizes, send your completed crossword to 'Freedom Crossword', Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX to reach us by 7th January 2009 or, if you're in the London area and you're mistrustful of the mail, why not bring your entry to us in person and check out our new and improved bookshop at the same time. The winner will be the first correct entry drawn out of the hat and the crossword answers and the winner will be revealed in our next issue, which should hit the streets on 17th January 2009

Year of change at Freedom

It's not just the paper which has had a makeover...

At last can be revealed the full tale of Freedom Bookshop's move downstairs. Back in July the credit crunch forced us to abandon our long cherished plan to flog 84b and establish the much needed Anarchist Mission to the Bahamas. Instead we decided to reinvigorate the shop by putting it on the ground floor.

As older readers will remember, Freedom Press moved to Angel Alley in 1969 and later managed to buy the building through a combination of generous donations and auctioning clippings from Kropotkin's beard.*

The downstairs was originally used as a print shop by Aldgate Press until 1995 when they moved to posher premises in Gunthorpe Street. Thereafter it became the storeroom for Freedom Press books. The only excuse we can offer is that boxes of books are really heavy and no one fancied carrying them up the stairs.

Thus the first step was to move the boxes. They had to be stuffed in nooks and crannies around the building to the great inconvenience of users of the Autonomy Club meeting room and the London Coalition Against Poverty, who had just moved into an office on the first floor.

Many volunteers helped clearing, cleaning and doing up downstairs to the point where we could use it for a post Anarchist Bookfair party. Around 200 comrades were able to come to this event and witness through boozefuddled eyes the transformation in progress. Again we appealed for help to construct new shelving and the movement responded with a gang of cack-handed chancers to whom we are eternally grateful.



The first books go on the shelves ...



Finally no anarchist project would be complete without state funding and we were able to secure it through a three-month 'new deal' placement for a full-time shop volunteer. Even so it hasn't been cheap, with the total cost of the move being nearly £6,000. To put it in context, that's half the shop's turnover last year. You can guess what comes next ... the desperate appeal for you to buy more stuff. So to tempt you here's how good the new shop is.



... and a bookshop is born

It's twice the size of the upstairs room, enabling us to stock a wider range of books as well as papers, pamphlets, badges, T-shirts, diaries and Zapatista coffee. Nor are we restricted to anarchist publishers, we can provide 'normal' books as well. If you must buy Jamie Oliver or Harry Potter get them from us – orders for UK books in print take around a week.

As well as Freedom Press titles, we now have Rebel Press, Phoenix Press and Attack International titles available at wholesale or on sale or return for anarchists to sell on. Also we are now open regularly on Sundays from noon till 4pm.

The next step is the website. As many frustrated readers know it has not been possible for some time to order books or subscribe to the paper online. Our top team of nerdy geeks are now working on this and Atheism willing we will be up and running with payment systems in place early in the new year.

Combined with this we hope to be able to accept card payments in the shop. For more information you can e-mail Andy the shop coordinator at shop@freedompress.org.uk or phone us on 020 7247 9249 during shop hours or, best of all, pop in and see our shiny new shop for yourself.

Andy Meinke

* For a full account of the history of Freedom premises and much else beside see *Freedom: A Hundred Years*, yours for only £14.95 post free. A snip!

FEATURE



From top: *A Bug's Life*; the Pixar Studios at Emeryville, California; *Ratatouille*; left, *Wall-e*

A sideways look

Having small children, a large proportion of the films I have seen in the last six years or so have been animated. A surprising number of them are deliciously subversive. What is most interesting is that so many of the highest grossing CGI animations have political themes, even the ones made by News International, though the market leader Pixar, now part of Disney, makes a lot of the strongest points.

Pixar started with theatrically-released feature films in 1995, the first of which was *Toy Story*. Basically a buddy movie, it was not particularly political, but was followed by *A Bug's Life*, which features themes of individualism, solidarity and a parasitic caste of grasshoppers filling a role very similar to that of the State.

In *A Bug's Life*, an ant colony gets bullied by a mob of grasshoppers into handing over large amounts of food every year. Eccentric individualist ant Flik has various plans to help the colony gather more food, but these go wrong and all the food offered to the grasshoppers is lost. To help save the colony, he goes off to find warriors who can fight the grasshoppers, but ends up finding bugs from a travelling circus, who he mistakes for warriors. The grasshoppers are shown to understand that their position in society comes from the fear of the ants, who outnumber them a hundred to one. They are a parasitical group that contributes nothing except for 'protection', mainly from themselves, in much the same way that a lot of would-be states and mafias work. After some adventures, the ants realise their strength lies in numbers and, linking arms in a visual gesture of solidarity, drive out the

grasshoppers. The message of this film is clear – unproductive classes can be defeated by the solidarity of the productive class.

The next Pixar film, *Toy Story 2*, featured the same characters as the first one, but one of them is stolen by a greedy toy store owner. It's the first of Pixar's films to explicitly feature a capitalist as villain, though in this case it is only one capitalist who behaves in an erratic and juvenile way. At the film's conclusion, the defeated store owner is shown on a TV advert running a closing down sale, because his bad actions have led to his ruin in a classic morality tale.

Monsters, Inc was the next film up, with an ecological undercurrent and capitalist villains. The film is set in a parallel world of monsters, which is powered by screams harvested by scaring children. The monster world is running out of screams, because modern kids have become desensitised by video games and mass media, making them harder to scare. The monsters believe that children are toxic and have created a powerful Child Detection Agency (CDA) to prevent direct contact with them. Against the background of the scream shortage, an obvious parallel with energy shortages in

our near future, the management of Monsters, Inc, recruit an unsavoury villain to carry out experiments on children to increase the scream that can be obtained. The management are clearly villains, and the CEO is arrested at the end by the CDA after vowing to do anything to keep the company afloat. The film's ending ducks the issues raised by finding new management who aren't as bad as the previous, and by tapping new forms of power that are less harmful – children's laughter.

Not all Pixar's films have politics, though. *Finding Nemo*, is about an over-protective father on a quest to rescue his son who has been kidnapped by an Australian dentist. Apart from an underlying theme of over-exploitation of the oceans, this has little to offer on today's society. *Cars*, the seventh film made, is a fable about the triumph of small-town values set in a world populated

solely by anthropomorphised cars, obliterating any environmental concerns shown in previous films. It is Pixar's worst performing film in box office terms, though the merchandising opportunities appear to be endless. It is fun, though, and the hippy VW camper with his organic fuel is a nice touch.

The sixth offering was *The Incredibles*, a tale of everyday superheroes forced to hide their identities after the public start to sue them for their activities. The obvious theme is of those who are different trying to fit in and the film's main villain is a frustrated fan of a superhero, Mr Incredibile, who becomes a Bond-style super-villain. My favourite part of this film is when, in his undercover job working for an insurance company, Mr Incredibile is carpeted by his boss for not working hard enough for "our people – our stockholders" and told not to help someone being mugged. He flings the irritating, uptight, nitpicking little manager through several walls and breaks all his limbs. None of his colleagues appear too distraught. Wish fulfilment for the writers, perhaps? Or indeed anyone working anywhere where profit comes before people. (Just about all of us, then). The film follows a fairly predictable action setting, but does relentlessly pose the question of whether a man's work or family should come first.

2007 saw *Ratatouille*, a film about a gourmand rat who dreams of becoming a chef and realises his ambition through a clumsy kitchen porter. The rat follows in the footsteps of master chef Gusteau, who always stated that "anybody can cook". The premise of the film is to show that skill not background is paramount. This was followed this year by *Wall-E*, about a robot left behind on earth to clean up the mountains of rubbish left by the humans. Aside from being an unusual love story between cute robots, the film scores with its obvious warnings about the throwaway consumer society and the environmental degradation caused by it. There is only one company left in the world, called Buy 'N' Large (BnL), who own everything, and whose brand is ubiquitous. In space, humans lose their bones and become more like beached whales, though they start to recover when the Earth comes to support plant life again and they return. There can of course be no irony that *Wall-E* is sold by Tesco and Wal-Mart, the most obvious targets of the BnL satire.

It is unsurprising that Pixar's films shy away from the comprehensive critique of capitalism that they sometimes hint at. After all, no matter how creative the studio is, it still has a bottom line that must be maintained. What they do provide, however, is a subversively satisfying twist with enough bite to offset the cloying Disney treacle.

Svartfrosk

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON
DECEMBER

20th Plane Stupid benefit with live music, food and dancing, bands and DJs tbc plus very special guests, at 12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA from 7.30pm, see cowleyclub.org.uk for more

26th Critical Mass bike powered events reclaiming city roads on the last Friday of the month – to see if there's one in your area see critical-mass.info/europe.html#europe
31st Offline new years eve punk rock party, with the incredible Ramones tribute band I Wanna Be Sedated bringing in the New Year with an almighty gabba gabba hey! plus great DJs spinning dance tunes till 4am, laying down ska, punk, electro, indie and more at the Prince Albert, 418 Coldharbour Lane, Brixton SW9 8LF from 8pm until 4am, see offline-club.com

JANUARY

2nd South London Critical (Climate Change) Mass Bike Ride starting at around 6.30pm at Peckham Library, London SE15 5JR, celebrating cycling and ways to stop climate change.

3rd Exeter Critical Mass, meet at 12 noon at Cathedral Green, Exeter.

7th Torriano Poets for Peace, hosted by John Rety, from 7pm until 9pm at Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, see housmans.com/events.

11th Seven years of Guantánamo demonstration, with speakers including Andy Worthington (journalist), Jean Lambert (Green MEP), Bruce Kent (Pax Christi), Imam Shafeek Begg (Lewisham Mosque), Mohammed Yahya (hip hop artist) and others at the American Embassy, Grosvenor Square, London, W1A 1AE, from 3pm until 5pm, for more information call 07809 757 176, email london.gtmo@googlemail.com or see guantanamo.org.uk

12th Climate Rush will hit Heathrow for an action against the construction of the third runway and the unsustainable use of short-haul, national flights and will take place on the day MPs return from their winter holiday, see climaterush.co.uk

IN THE SPIRIT OF THE SUFFRAGETTES

CLIMATE RUSH Hits Heathrow



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BOOK

The Given Day

by Dennis Lehane

published by Doubleday (on 29th January), £16.99

This historical epic abandons the crime thriller territory where its author made his name in order to tackle wider themes of social conflict, while still mobilising 'class rage' to illuminate pressure points in society from the perspectives of those traditionally sidelined in such epoch-defining accounts. So, pivotal developments in Boston after the Great War set the scene for twentieth-century patterns of US governance and exemplify specific phenomena with continuing resonance – not least the threat of terrorism here represented by European insurrectionary anarchists. Based on detailed research from contemporaneous material, the novel features fictionalised appearances by real figures like Calvin Coolidge (Massachusetts Governor before becoming President), lawyer John Hoover (later the FBI's J. Edgar), Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor, and baseball legend Babe Ruth (prototyping the commodification of culture). Throw in the deadly postwar flu epidemic, endemic desperate poverty, racial apartheid combined with massive immigration, and labour unrest throughout the country prompting the Red Scare suppression of left-wing activism, and *The Given Day*'s heady brew culminates in 1919's failed Boston police strike.

Boston Mendacity Party

Mapping the contrasting biographies of two main protagonists facilitates the exploration of changing social configurations and loyalties in a period of unprecedented upheaval. Fiery Irish patrolman Danny Coughlin, son of a legendary police captain, is charged with infiltrating local agitators on the promise of promotion. But the pitiful wages and conditions of city policemen instead lead his sympathies towards the class-struggle as Boston's embryonic police union affiliates to the AFL. Meanwhile Luther Laurence flees Oklahoma after killing a vicious crime boss and lands a servant's job in the Coughlin household, and the pair's attempts to struggle through very different personal and family troubles increasingly intersect and confront the brutal class- and race-hatred underpinning



local ruling class institutions – the increasingly sophisticated strategies the latter pursue to maintain their power, wealth and privilege being heavily suggestive of the multiple manipulations and dishonesties of state and capital to this day.

Unfortunately the book's exegesis merely mirrors – failing to contextualise and complicate – its characters' knee-jerk stereotypes concerning new political and social groupings. So socialist and anarchist organisers are summarily dismissed as 'noodle-heads', fighting members of the Lettish Workingman's Society hard-drinking buffoons, and the Italian immigrant community unknowably alien. Followers of Luigi Galleani (stupidly described by Lehane as "the Osama bin Laden of his time") are, then, evil beyond reason, planning the mass murder of ordinary folk as opposed to bombing government and business targets. In effect the tabloid hysteria and prejudicial 'learned opinion' of the time is taken as factual, rather than part of the orchestrated propaganda that the author is elsewhere crystal-clear on. Despite the convincing central thread of growing respect among Danny and Luther and their circle, the price paid for their race-transcending solidarity is therefore an individualistic collapse of political potential. Unintentionally, perhaps, the prime contemporary lesson from this exciting and ambitious novel is that forging common cause by cementing fresh divisions is dangerously self-defeating.

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

QUIZ ANSWERS

- Barry Manilow. A US judge in Colorado ruled that people convicted of noise nuisance would have to listen to this played loud for an hour.
- They played it, along with other rock music, very loud at the compound in Panama where CIA-sponsored dictator Manuel Noriega was holed up. It later turned out that the psychological warfare element was only secondarily, and it was originally to cover up negotiations.
- Bertrand Russell in his 1918 *Proposed roads to freedom* (on page 44 of the 1970 Routledge edition).
- They were people who read to the workers while they assembled cigars, paid for by the workers themselves. They would read newspapers and serialise novels and political works. The bosses hated them and provoked a strike in 1931 in Florida by smashing up the platform they read from.

Set into song



Charles Parker, Peggy Seeger, Dean Glitter and Ewan MacColl in the late 1950s

Fifty years ago this year, a new and exciting art form in media expression came into existence. The radio public had heard nothing like it; both its form and content were so radical their impact and pioneering techniques remain as cornerstones of television and radio journalism today.

Working class voices were universally absent from radio in the post-war years. This was a powerful medium, more powerful than the press, and access to it was tightly constrained. Yet here we had not only working class voices, but workers' voices talking about work, about images of life and labour unseen and previously ignored. The words of workers, as well as being spoken direct to the listening public, were set into song and set to music by Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger. These were, with great precision and technical skill, turned into hour-long programmes by Charles Parker, a man who pioneered techniques hitherto undiscovered.

They were an unlikely team: MacColl was already an accomplished and visionary stage agit-prop performer who had, post war, brought folk-style music and socialist realism to the stage together with more than a little jazz. The Theatre Workshop with Ewan and his wife of the period, Joan Littlewood, had been pioneering. MacColl had been a giant of progressive theatre and not one confined to 'the lovelies' in London. In '46, he staged

a play "of the greatest importance" but didn't announce its title or subject. It was *Uranium 235* and was presented to a packed and thoroughly working class Butlins audience, where it was met with the enthusiasm and responses of the football terraces. The stage was bare but had amplified sound machines, passing cars, trains, whispering voices, and announcements of news items. People had seen nothing like it – both in terms of content or form. The travelling Theatre Workshop form was to find a permanent home in what was then a very much run down East End. With Behan, Delany and Norman in the '50s, it was to set the scene for the late '60s political and community theatre. At its inception had been MacColl.

Then there was Charles Parker, a long thin, and now stooped, former submarine commander (and war hero), who worked radio decks and splicing equipment like musicians worked keyboards and guitar frets.

And finally Peggy Seeger, the product of an intensely musical and political American family, still a wee lass by comparison, but lacking nothing in musical and directional skills. Her life had already crossed Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly, Ma Molly Jackson and the Lomax family, giants in American folk culture, linked cheek-by-jowl to the trade union and progressive workers' movements.

Her elder brother, Pete, had founded the Almanac singers in the '40s, singing uncompromising songs of labour. They went on to become The Weavers, with Guthrie and Pete as singer-songwriters, selling millions in their heyday from 1949–52, with songs such as Leadbelly's 'Goodnight Irene', and Pete and Co's 'Where Have All The Flowers Gone', 'Turn Turn Turn', 'We Shall Overcome', and 'If I Had A Hammer'. Songs which would inspire generations of peace and justice protesters round the world, without most of them ever knowing where they came from. They were highly controversial, Pete explained: "only Commies used words like peace and freedom". By '51, their lives started to fall apart as the US state went into steep repression. In that year, at the height of their success, Senator McCarthy's House Un-American Activities Committee blacklisted The Weavers. It split the family to the extent that Pete and Peggy's father, Charles, once progressive too, moved to safer political and geographical locations. Peggy says:

"My parents were radical in a certain way in the thirties, tempered in the forties, intimidated in the fifties. I don't ever remember being disturbed, even by Hiroshima. We didn't talk politics as I remember at our table, and yet I was of a Liberal family that

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REVIEWS

Set into song

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was supposed to be progressive and supposed to be political."

Charles Seeger hadn't minded 'progressive', but being called 'left wing' was too dangerous a step. It was to cause angry reflections between him and Peggy later in life.

Peggy was in Copenhagen in March 1956 when the BBC finally tracked her down via Alan Lomax, who had in turn contacted her dad. The BBC needed someone for a television version of the play *Dark Side Of The Moon*. Specifically they wanted someone who could play the five-string banjo, act, and sing. Barbara Allen. Lomax had told the BBC he would get them "the best banjo player in Europe". She was 21 and had nothing more than the clothes she stood up in. We are told Lomax's then girlfriend was a model, who did a sluice down and fancy hair job on her, togged her in modern gear and "stood her in unfamiliar high heels". By the time she tottered into Lomax's basement studio to review the scripts all heads turned, MacColl's in particular.

MacColl was on the BBC's 'dangerous man' blacklist when Parker met him while producing a programme on experimental theatre. Though chalk and cheese, at this point they both shared a desire to make imaginative yet 'true' radio. Both were fascinated by the power and potential of the human voice. The portable tape recorder, massive by current standards, nonetheless was allowing Charles access to outside-of-studio, on-site homes and factories. He hit upon the story of a train driver who had been awarded the George Cross for bravery, John Axon.

When it hit the airwaves, it was a sensation. Ferris in the *Observer* (1958):

"Last week a technique and subject got married, and nothing in radio kaleidoscopy,

or whatever you care to call it, will ever be done the same again. This was music with a purpose, its picture of a morning in winter, a family and friends ... a train, a broken brake, and a man staying on to die, was a sharp and strange and powerful ... anecdote turned into song, song turned into a hiss of steam..."

With Charles gathering in 'actuality', he had commissioned Ewan to compose the songs and music. Peggy wasn't on the scene, interestingly enough, as Ewan had fallen out with her while they were in Moscow, we are told, "when she sang rousing American religious rather than political songs". She had then, against advice, gone off on a singing tour of China. She ended her solo tour alone, freezing and almost dying of pneumonia in a student dorm in Poland. Cox comments that this was an international crash course out of her cloistered childhood. In fact, Peggy was the missing link in making *The Ballad of John Axon* work musically and dramatically. Ewan had spotted the great dramatic effect of the workers' voices and dialogue. Charles baulked at it at first, then he began to see the whole emerging:

"For the first time you were telling a story without a narrator and without actors, being able to tell a story by context. After the crash ... you have simply some chords on the guitar, another verse of the ballad and then the entry of the fireman, saying, 'it was still dark when they got to the shed that Sunday morning' ... You realise it works, it works."

Initial audience research, however, had suggested it maybe *didn't* work, that the story got lost in the background noise and songs. Radio listeners were unused to this form, were used to conventional start-at-the-beginning-and-run-through-to-the-end chronologically told tales. Ewan, however, adopted a ballad form, in which you don't tell the story straight out, but jump between present and past, dialogue and narrative switching between tenses and viewpoints. For those unused to it, it was a maddening jumble; for others it was brilliance. Nowadays it is a tried and tested form of film making; then it was totally new.

As it turned out the widow of John Axon, the railway workers and the journalists liked it. For the BBC's listeners' panel, opinion was sharply divided. And opinion within the BBC as to whether there should be any more of these 'radio ballads' was for a time held in the balance. That 'the man in the street' should have anything to contribute to the 'sacred altar' of broadcasting was a novel idea. Still more so, the fact that he should be using this medium to express his own take on things, and in his own accent, sounded like an assault on establishment core values.

External concerns were one thing, but it was the internal battles over direction, control and content that nearly wrecked the project. With characters as different, independent, and strong-headed as MacColl, Seeger and Parker, it is hardly surprising. Parker at first wanted to focus on the work, as in *The Song*



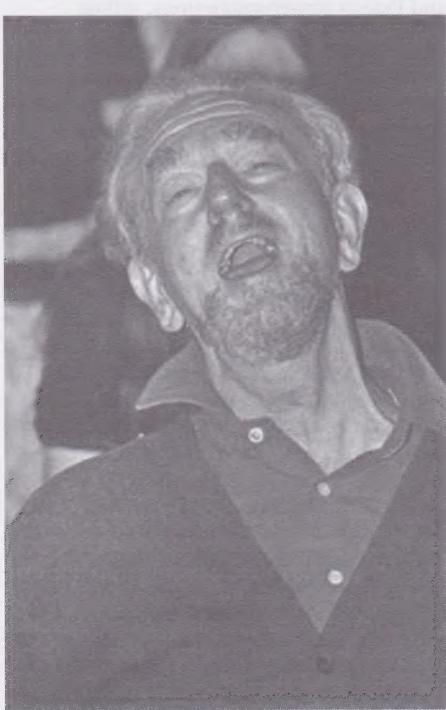
Ewan MacColl

Of The Roads, about road building, whereas Ewan wanted to focus on the worker. This was quite aside from the huge technical problems with the primitive editing and recording equipment available to Charles in this period. The three of them would take off 'into the field' and record masses of actuality, far, far more than could ever be used in a programme. This mass of unedited and often non-specific material landed on Charles's lap for selection and editing. The resulting voice scores were then sent on to Ewan and Peggy for musical and song illustration rising directly from the rhythm, sounds and content of the voices. Charles would meantime beg, steal and invent sound effects. All of this had to come back and be drafted into a coherent whole. At length, after the selection of the spoken actuality, the voices would be played live into the studio, with MacColl and Seeger taking up the musical and song adaptations as they came up, forming one entity, as if the spoken voices were another set of instruments on a single stage.

Disagreements over direction were still unresolved, however, and *The Song Of The Road* in particular brought the team into near dissolution. With any thought of a third programme or more now very close to the edge, Charles agreed some ground rules: that the programmes should not be about work processes and machines, but about workers' attitudes towards them. They should concern themselves not with 'the things' but with people's attitudes toward those things, and the way in which those attitudes were described in words. Thereafter, as Charles saw the depth and quality that this shift in emphasis and focus brought, he was sold on it too. From then on, there was little more than a cigarette paper of difference between Charles and Ewan. (Though Cox tells us "they would occasionally argue furiously over that cigarette paper's thickness".)

Singing The Fishing brought the team into contact with some remarkable characters,

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Charles Parker

Set into song

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Mike, Peggy and Pete Seeger at Peggy's 70th birthday concert at Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, May 2005

Photo: Philip Ryal

men like Sam Larner, archetypal one might say of exactly the kind of salty, shanty-singing sea dog that a folk singer with a tape recorder might dream of finding. Sam's tales, in his rich Norfolk accent, painted word pictures of the work of the fisherman such that none but the fishers themselves had discovered before. Here was the rolling ocean, mapped and plucked from memory, focused in great events and filed in Larner's mental locker box. Here, ready-made, was Sam's traditional collection of sea songs. When Peggy came to draft Sam and the other fisher folk's words into song, Sam would swear he had known that song all his life. For Peggy, "When this happened we knew we had really come close to capturing the true effects of the fishing life upon these men".

Overall direction of ballad themes seemed at first random. In part, this had been due to the high cost of production, roughly the same as a TV production – bad news for a medium in sharp retreat in the post-war years. This put pressure on Charles to run some cheaper local programmes to bring down the average cost. This brought us a programme on jewellery making; *Cry From the Cut* on canals; and, most dramatically and emotionally challenging of all, *The Body Blow*, about Polio sufferers. Charles was to receive greater public response to this programme than to any of the others, all bar three from people deeply moved and impressed by it.

In many ways the sixth radio ballad was almost as challenging. *Growing Pains* turned its attention towards a new social phenomenon: teenage. To my mind and ear, this was the one that failed. Failed because of the insistence on taking teenage 'culture' into the folk media, to find folk singers young enough to sound like teenagers, but then addressing dialogue which struggled with

the form. As Cox comments of this and another later cameo:

"Not known in Denmark Street was a programme about modern folk singers and writers, an attempt to counter what he and Ewan saw as the flood of debased culture arriving from America, exemplified by the pop music he loathed with a passion. These were the days of Elvis's imitators – Cliff Richard and the rest – singing ersatz American songs in ersatz mid-Atlantic accents – and I'm afraid the teenagers round the juke box weren't listening to folk music or discussing Weskers's latest play, then or ever."

Back into the main stream, though not in what any of the Lefts would have considered 'the proletariat' was *The Fight Game*, about professional boxing. Yet the ballad is intensely class conscious and political:

"All fighters have got to come off of poor families. Before you become a boxer you've got to be poor, you know, off a big family, or a poor family. But you don't get a doctor's son coming to be a boxer because he's been spoilt, he's had a good upbringing, he's never wanted."

As the ballads developed, they perhaps became even more overtly class and politically conscious. *The Big Hewer*, for example, possibly the most powerful drama of them all, told in the voices and words of the men and women of the coalfields. Then, fast on its heels, *The Travelling People*. This confronted one of the most deep-seated prejudices of working people themselves – about travellers, gypsies and tinkers. Nearly three full minutes pass without any instrumentation, a children's anti-gypsy playground song, then a roll call of pejorative names for travellers, followed by Ewan's opening song, sung in stark unaccompanied *sean-a-nos* Gaelic style. For this one, Charles had two distinct sound profiles: outside and indoors. On the inside,

those who found gypsies intolerable, and outside, the sound of the travellers: "the murmuring of voices, dogs barking, a snatch of birdsong, children's play. And the first noises we hear are set in sharp contrast: our world and theirs. The 'big twelve-wheeler that shook the bed' of Minty Smith as she gave birth on the move, replaced by the steady clop of the horse as it moseys along in harness, finding its own way as she does so." The programme develops musically as one of the masterpieces of the whole series.

The book goes on to talk of life after the programmes, the gagging of Charles by the BBC, and the movement to take some of the programmes on to TV (with disputed amounts of success or otherwise), giving a precise review of the brave effort to transport powerful issues from one medium to the other. And, more particularly, the attempts to redevelop the form back onto the stage, first with Charles's own agit-prop street and stage presentations of *The Collier Laddie*, which intersected with the rebirth of miners' militancy in the '70s, and played to enthusiastic crowds from the pit communities – larger than life and before their eyes, something of a 'happening' and a special, almost spectacle, normal working people had never seen before. Then came the birth of the Banner Theatre, which Charles launched, and which continues to this day, carrying the true mantle of the radio ballads and all the strands of its own inspirational origins.

After a hectic day of early rising, driving, lectures, meetings with Banner, rehearsing for the new production *Steel*, Charles was coming back from a pub meeting when suddenly he found he couldn't see. He died of an aneurysm. Later that same day John Lennon was shot dead. When Melvyn Bragg was asked a few days later, which figure

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WILDCAT

On December 8th, the American military flew some widows and orphans to Guantánamo Bay.

For a winter sun holiday??

No, to see a man with a long white beard.

Santa Claus??

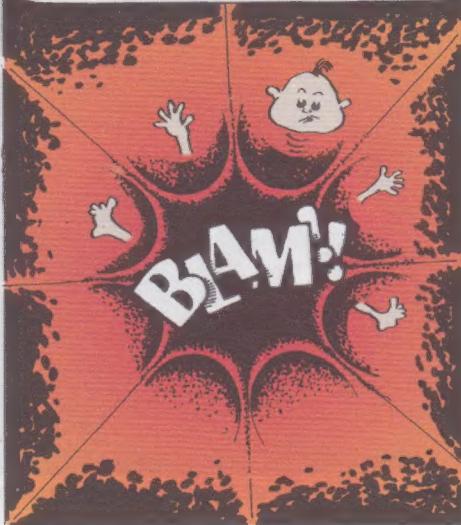
No, the bloke who claims responsibility for the 9/11 spectacular in New York. They've shipped out 50 reporters as well, to watch his trial.

Go on then. Why??



They need a big story to drown out the story that on December 6th, 104 countries signed a United Nations treaty renouncing cluster bombs.

That could give rise to back-stories about millions of bomblets from American cluster bombs, left scattered about Laos since the Vietnam war ended in 1973, which have killed 6,000 civilians – twice as many as were killed in the 9/11 attack – and are still killing.



I thought you were going to tell me a joke.

Sorry.



Review

◀ page 31

most, inspired him, he said it was Charles Parker.

Anne Karpf comments, "some people reckon that the decline of the BBC began when Charles Parker was edged out of broadcasting in a cravenly bureaucratic fashion and the whole innovative flowering of radio came to an end."

This book stands as a textbook on a genre, a mini-bibliography of MacColl and Seeger and Parker, and their muse, on radio and stage. It concludes with a chapter on 'The New Generation', the drafters of the recently aired modern radio ballads, reflecting on contrasts, techniques, themes and voices, as well as providing highly

informative technical endnotes on methods and instruments. It is dedicated: "In memory of Ewan MacColl, 1915–1989, Charles Parker, 1919–1980, and in celebration of Peggy Seeger born 1935."

I feel immensely proud to have known all three and valued them as friends and comrades. This is the definitive history and rationale of three inspired individuals, and a novel and unique initiative.

Set Into Song: Ewan MacColl, Charles Parker, Peggy Seeger and The Radio Ballads by Peter Cox, published by Labatie Books. The book is available from Peter's website www.setintosong.co.uk, where you can read the first two pages of each chapter plus much extra material. It will cost you just £15 including postage and packing, and you can ask for a signature and dedication if you'd like one.

THE QUIZ

1. Whose music was used as a punishment this year?
2. What unusual use did the US Military have for 'Welcome to the Jungle' by Guns'n'Roses?
3. Which internationally-famous philosopher wrote at the beginning of the twentieth century: "for every bomb manufactured by an Anarchist, many millions are manufactured by Governments, and for every man killed by Anarchist violence, many millions are killed by the violence of States."
4. What was the significance of readers in Cuban and American cigar factories? And what was the response of the bosses?

Answers on page 28

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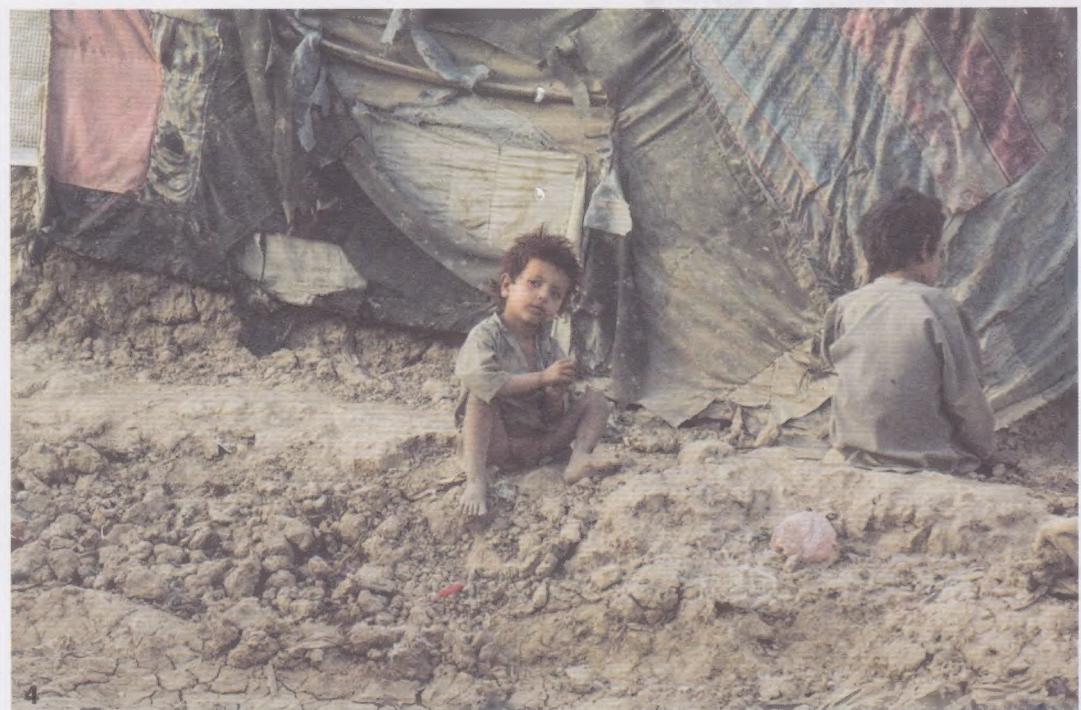
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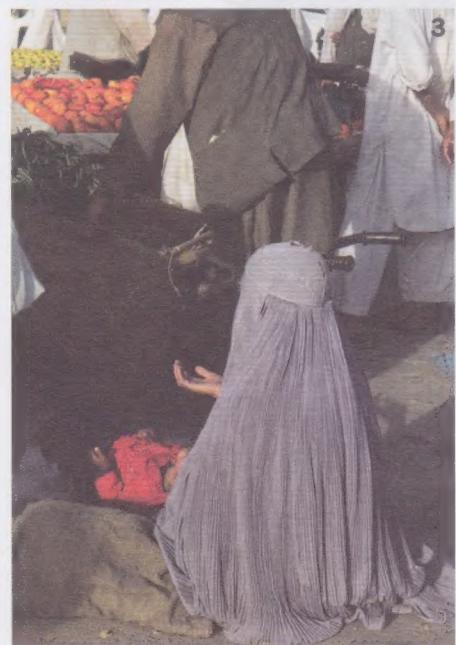
00 years, heroin use has part of Afghan culture, small amounts in the 80s to give to Russian I noticed was the large who were disabled or using nearly suffering from problems. My guide Kabul heroin is cheaper

een forgiven for thinking in motive for invading liberate oppressed sets of Kabul there is suggest that women are inspirations. Even shops thing are all run by men. aw openly earning



money during my short visit were those who were forced by poverty to beg from strangers.

4 One aspect of the war getting little coverage is the refugee situation. On the edge of the city I visited a camp that was home to 900 families on the brink of starvation. They had fled their homes in Helmand and Kandahar when their villages had become battlefields between NATO and the Taliban. Since arriving in Kabul they had received little or no support and were furious with their government and the occupation forces. Children were dying of curable diseases and some cases



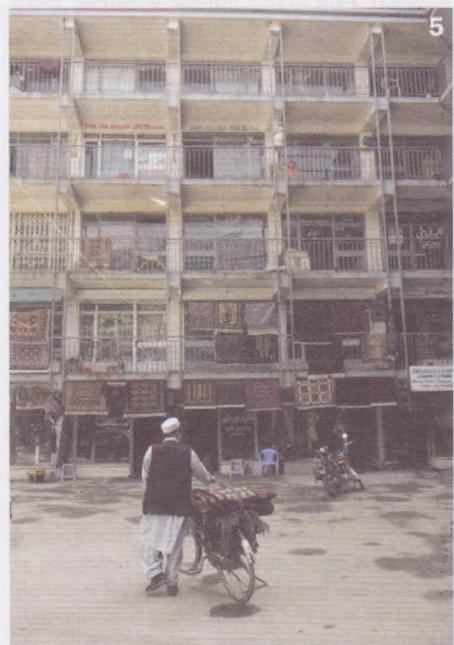
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were being sold into servitude by parents desperate to save the rest of the family. It is estimated that at least 235,000 Afghans have been displaced by the fighting and a famine is predicted in the country this winter.

5 The Afghan government were hoping to attract back the travellers and traders so vital to the economy in the 1960s and '70s. The worsening security situation and a nearby bombing has ensured that the carpet and rug bazaar is all but deserted.

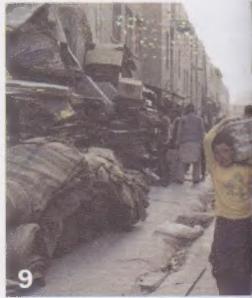
6 I was surprised to meet Pakistani refugees in Kabul. They lived in a camp of over 300



5



6



9

